S t o r i e s II

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The Secret of the Ruins

I often thought that my old friend's life story was mainly about chasing after something, and that he was usually pretty disappointed with what he was pursuing. That day, while he was talking about his research into social history in a quiet corner of the coffeehouse, I can say I was sure of it.

"Ghost towns," he began. "This title could also have been 'Dead cities.' However, I can say that the previous association is more suitable for the world in my head. Whenever I find one of these towns in the country, going there and imagining the people who used to live there was something more than just meaningful activities that stirred my restless soul. When I learned of such a place's existence in the East, I was determined to see it. One day, I put this thought into action. The day after I set off, I arrived at the settlement around the afternoon. After checking into the hotel and reserving my room, I headed towards the old town, which was a 20-minute walk away. After leaving the district that had been moved to a higher place, the dirt road was sloping downwards. This place was far from the main road and stretched into a narrow valley that was not very straight, gradually steepening among the high hills. A donkey with a load on it passed right beside me accompanied by a boy with a stick, heading towards the district. There was a quite steep streambed right next to the road. In the lower parts of the opposite hill, there was an old water canal that I think conveyed drinking water. Various cemeteries caught attention along the road. At that moment, I was startled by the eerie voice of a raven. I looked around but couldn't see

it. A little further on, a flock of birds took flight and moved away towards the valley.

“The ruins of the city, built on a sloping terrain from the foot of the castle on a distant hill, were virtually hidden by the wild vegetation that had grown up on it, making them indistinguishable from the natural landscape. Several bridges, large and small, connected the two sides of the dry stream, which disappeared into the windings of the narrow valley. Finally, an old minaret caught my eye, which surprised me greatly. Its location seemed inappropriate. The area around the minaret was unsuitable for a place of worship. Next to it, a small, unlined bridge had been built over the dried-up stream flowing from above. This was the first time I had ever seen such a place. Mosques without minarets are everywhere, but a minaret without a place of worship was truly astonishing to me.

“A poor, slightly blurry photograph of the city before its abandonment, with its crowded houses and a complexity difficult to comprehend, contained nothing that evoked a sense of nostalgia. Undoubtedly, not much trace of the settlement remained of those intertwined structures today. The past had been buried, as if its dust had been scattered into the air. The fate of abandonment, so acutely felt, evoked a feeling difficult to describe. It was as if an unsettling silence could be felt amidst the ruins where owls perched. Was it even possible? It was impossible to imagine how harsh the living conditions that forced people to abandon the place where they were born, raised, and lived their entire lives could be. Surely, I thought. “These people surely didn’t destroy the world of their childhood in one fell swoop. Didn’t they have any memories that left a mark on their minds, that they dismissed the days spent in those alleyways with the back of their hands, as if they had never existed?”

“A deathly silence, almost terrifying, pervaded the entire place. It crossed my mind that buried beneath these ruins, these piles of stone and earth, were countless memories of the city’s prosperity. An abandonment that plunged one into a deep sorrow.

“The alarming aspect of the land to which the city had adapted was its inability to be protected. It was already being said that bandits played a role in its complete abandonment. I had read in the Sharia Records that these bandit raids had been the fate of other settlements throughout history. As I drove down the road, I became more and more influenced by the geography.

“I knew places destroyed by fire disasters. Fires that reduced huts and palaces to ashes must hold a special place in our history. There are also settlements abandoned by landslides. Earthquakes, with their massive human losses, always seem to be the most severe. The role of floods in the damage caused to settlements cannot be ignored, of course. The role played by wars in the destruction of cities is a devastation for civilization. In short, for various reasons, human life is constantly faced with these difficult-to-solve problems that destroy the past.

“It's no wonder that there isn't much information in the records about this ancient settlement. According to these records, which mention the presence of Muslim and non-Muslim prisoners, it had a prison. In fact, the city's location resembled an open-air prison.” This was an area surrounded by steep, impassable hills. The eerie effect of this landscape, which ended at a narrow gorge through which a dry stream flowed, naturally transformed into a prison, was palpable. I wondered how depressing this bleak environment could be in shaping people's personalities.

“Below, I noticed someone grazing goats around the half-demolished minaret of a mosque built on the slopes of the increasingly narrow valley. “After coming this far, it’s unacceptable not to greet them,” I thought. I walked toward him. When I reached him, I saw that he was an elderly man. I wondered what intense suffering was concealed by the deep lines on his face, tanned by years of sun exposure. It was as if he spent his days almost entirely isolated from people, always confined to himself. Receiving my greeting, the old man said, “Welcome.” “Treasure seekers come here occasionally. So, what is your reason for coming?”

“Just curiosity,” I said. “People don’t leave their homes easily.” But the great disasters they could not overcome forced them to abandon their homes." Frankly, it would be a lie to say I wasn't delighted to hear that he was a native of this city, and that I would gain firsthand knowledge. As the old man began to speak, he seemed to guide my thoughts, opening a door to the secrets of the sinister world of ruins that had shocked me unexpectedly. As he turned to the past, I felt as if he had begun to relive the past. "Once upon a time, when I was still a child, the trunk of the mulberry tree that clung to the wall was so thick that we could only climb up to the mosque by climbing its branches. Now there is neither the mulberry tree nor the mosque it supported, as if to prevent it from collapsing. Everything is like a dream. It is said that a man climbed from the castle to this place, that is, to the city.

“He walked from one end of the city to the other, over the houses. I suppose this creates an idea of what the city was like in its day. To put it another way, one might think there was a sense of solidarity among people, just as

the houses were back to back. Perhaps there was, but I don't recall it.

"From the very beginning of his speech, he evoked in my mind the perspective of a historian who caused stereotypes to unravel. This perspective, which virtually undermined the centuries-long dominance of a rigid administrative approach that disallowed any thought based on diversity and deviated from traditional social thought, added a vibrant, vibrant, and dynamistic quality to life. It assumed that people's right to choose their own lives was natural. There was something about this old man's account that seemed to confirm that historian. I saw an unexpected spontaneity in people's initiative-requiring decisions, despite their utter helplessness in the face of insurmountable natural disasters. Yet, how deceptive this is! For, as a matter of principle, the ruler who shapes and directs a seemingly passive society is expected never to allow this.

“Finally, it occurred to me that I was listening to a rather unexpected speech from someone who herds sheep and goats alone in desolate pastures. His speech, which deeply touched me, blended religious underpinnings with a philosophical perspective. I saw traces of a rich life experience in the old shepherd's wrinkled face.

“As if a test, the veil before our eyes prevents us from seeing many things. If this veil were not present, we would be aware of the riches within ordinary life.”

“As the old shepherd recounted the city's past, he suddenly returned to reality, revealing the harsh face of reality and then, in his depiction, drawing attention to the harshness of human misery.

"After a series of disasters, the government decided to relocate the city. Following this, the place was quickly abandoned. People ripped out the doors and windows of

their homes, leaving nothing behind. These people, who had followed in the footsteps of their ancestors for centuries, finally succumbed to the disasters that pushed the limits of their endurance and abandoned their homes. And from then on, as if in unison, they never spoke a word about their former lives. In doing so, they somehow managed to erase all the memories etched in their minds, as if they had never existed." The old shepherd didn't offer an explanation for the people's seemingly incomprehensible attitude toward the past. But in his subsequent conversations, I thought he was expressing a belief that the Creator wanted His servants to reach maturity. However, I remember not being able to connect this belief to the real issue at the time.

“Listening to him, I sometimes felt like I was losing track. There were moments when I couldn't grasp his point. He approached philosophy's universal problem of existence from a mystical perspective, as if he were describing the city in a rather allegorical manner. I couldn't help but grasp the true meaning behind his words. At that moment, I was more concerned with grasping the spirit of his words than his impressively wise personality. In his speech, he spoke of the Creator without ever mentioning His name. I saw in the old man an admiration, a love, and a glorification of life. In his narratives, his joy for life was expressed through mature understanding and language. He treated his animals, indeed, all living things, with love. There were subtle touches in his words that made me realize the value of life just by being there. And it was clear that all these approaches were completely removed from the traditional mindset that viewed this world as false and deceptive.

“I can’t say I fully understood him. But this old man was no ordinary shepherd. He must have spent his life studying and acquiring knowledge. Or perhaps he had been at the feet of esteemed people, receiving their tutelage… Yet, he had no students… He simply shepherded the sheep and goats… And no one could understand that this old man was a wise man… As these thoughts played in my mind, I realized that, ultimately, I was struck by the extraordinary nature of his personality, without grasping his vision of the Creator and religion.

“Like a speck of dust blown in the wind… Or, as the poem says, he too ‘came to this world as a stranger and departed as a stranger.’ In fact, perhaps there are good lessons to be learned in this incident for intelligent minds. But years later, I still feel the astonishment and disappointment of that day.” But what did I expect to find in those ruins?

There was a long silence. The matter seemed to have ended without resolution. It wasn't until a long time later that I saw my old friend notice a few people a few tables away, out of sight. Two of the three people there stood up. Before leaving the coffeehouse, the larger one, aiming for a weight of 140 kilos, paid the bill.
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My friend, following them with his eyes, took a quiet sip from his teacup. "He always does that," he said.

"What?" I asked indifferently.

"He always pays the bill himself."

"Some people are like that," I said nonchalantly.

"Also, he never walks alone."

I realized my friend was going to talk at length about this giant of a man.

"Essentially, people reveal themselves with every move they make. More than twenty years ago, my mother, unable to remember, had nicknamed him 'the talker.' Even that old woman had recognized this immediately striking characteristic of a Northerner and labeled him. In truth, the talker was also the know-it-all.

"Know-it-all," he muttered. He had started talking, and I couldn't change the subject anymore.

"Know-it-all" repeated his statement. But then he said, "No." "Even that phrase doesn't fully describe him. While it means 'a wise man, one who understands everything,' he was more than that. He had an answer to every question and had lost all sense of wonder and awe. When he first met someone, he would figure that person out in five minutes at most. From that moment on, based on the grade he gave, that person would either be talked to or not.

"In other words, he was someone who looked at life in black and white," I agreed.

"I admit I had a hard time trying to understand his individuality. While he fit perfectly into a stereotype, I couldn't identify and reveal the characteristics that made him unique. Frankly, his desire to see the miraculous side of creation was always thwarted by a factory-like uniformity. Yet, "There is no repetition in manifestation," "The manifestation in the universe is in constant renewal." The format assigned to him was flawlessly successful. He always viewed life and events with an explanatory lens. Because he knew everything."

"At this point, a moment occurred that astonished me. One day, As we were leaving after a long conversation in the garden, he said, as if talking to himself, "What am I doing here?" I couldn't believe my ears. He acted as if he were acting out of an obligation to fulfill a promise he'd

made to someone. "What could I possibly learn..." Probably because he talked so much, there were moments when he wouldn't remember or acknowledge what he'd already said. So I never asked what he meant.

"It seems you must have known me for a long time."

"Yes," he said, "a long time." Then he added, "I don't want that to be deceptive."

"What do you mean?

"One day, someone you think you know well will mislead you. ‘Snow will fall on the mountains you trust.’

I asked hesitantly. "And did this giant man mislead you?" He smiled faintly. "Yes, he misled me," he said. I'd followed his every move for years. I'd tried to find some spontaneity in him. Unfortunately!... A complete disappointment!... Each time, I saw someone before me, like a programmed robot, someone I could predict exactly where and how he would move.

"She's starting to attract attention," I said. "Well!"... Then..."

"Until that five-year-old girl showed up."

"A girl!"...

Frankly, I never could have predicted where the conversation would lead. He was silent for a moment. He called the waiter to refill the tea.

"When I met him, he was still single. He soon married a teacher from a very different background. He became the father of two children, a boy and a girl, in quick succession. One of the things that made him lose his favor at the time concerned sanctity and privacy. One day, I don't remember for what reason, a few of us piled into a car, driving somewhere. He called his wife on his cell phone. He carried on a conversation that should have been between just the two of them, pointlessly, in front of

everyone. He had engaged in an unruly behavior, like a teenager trying to prove himself among his peers. It was a moment when alcohol had taken over, yet the people in the car hadn't a drop of alcohol in their mouths.

This situation was probably not my old friend's first disappointment, and it was a response to his quest for uniqueness.

“At first, I thought his stereotyped thoughts and behaviors were entirely influenced by a religious understanding. Later, I realized that people with different social views also shared a similarity. People's perspectives on life were influenced by the thought systems they embraced. Communism bred communists, liberalism bred liberals, and religion bred religious believers. The more devoted you were to a system, the more fanatical you could become. Our hulking hero was strikingly similar to a religious fanatic. The inconsistency that suffocated him was nothing more than the incompatibility of the realities of life and the ideal. He only once voiced the inconsistency he encountered along his path. Religious ideology couldn't always be applied to the realities of life. Even in his family life, he faced difficulties implementing the ideology's practices. He didn't easily learn that he couldn't neglect his daughter while fathering a son. But ultimately, to say that he learned about life from his children would be a humorous expression of the truth.

-I don't understand! ?..

-The little boy, his father's refrain from threats

"Dad, if you use violence, I'll report you to the police station."

The giant man was actually smart. Even though the boy's shocking words were directed at him—something he

would never tolerate in others—he recorded in his child's favor.

The boy understood the special efforts his father made in educating him, even through his sister's objections. The care his father showed his older brother naturally did not go unnoticed by the little girl. How could it? He consulted with teachers to ensure his child, whom he considered a pure, pure, sacred miracle, was perfectly prepared for life. He arranged for him to take private lessons in math, physics, and foreign languages, which he deemed important. He even hired a music teacher and taught him to play the saz (a saz). Feeling inadequate in his religious education, he arranged for him to learn Arabic pronunciation from a mosque teacher. The work schedule she had arranged for her child was so intense that, while visiting a friend, the conversation fell silent for a while when the father and son, leaning on each other, drifted off to sleep, accompanied by the sound of their snoring, which resembled the reciprocal sounds of two musical instruments playing in different tones. After a brief breath, my friend said, “I was considered a family friend back then.” “Once, I was sitting in a cramped room with my two children, using my newly purchased digital camera to take photos from books for a project he was working on. Meanwhile, the daughter tried to sit on her father's lap, who wasn't paying much attention to her, and hug him. But since the tarpaulin-like coat he wore had no grip, the child began to slide comically down his body. “Dad, I can't hold you.” I'd set the reels aside. "A camera wouldn't be enough to record this situation." For some reason, this visual situation later became far more meaningful than it was ludicrous.

Frankly, I couldn't contain myself. His every action was consistently ideological. He had no moral qualms.

Yet, on the other hand, he had a vast literature on the moral bankruptcy of people.

He took a short break while taking a few sips of his tea. His analyses of his friend felt like a digging deeper.

"That's why he never walks alone," I'd said. I suspect there's a reason for this, but I'm clearly having a hard time finding it. One day, three friends and I visited a retired teacher on the edge of town. The man had built a greenhouse in his large garden and grown cucumbers in it. As we entered his garden and approached the greenhouse, a large dog we hadn't noticed jumped out and attacked us. My friend and I, in complete panic, began running toward the door, practically pushing me back in an attempt to gain speed. In the short race, the dog passed me without paying any attention. Just as I was about to grab the leg of the massive creature in front of me, the chain around its neck stopped it from going any further. Naturally, we stopped visiting the retired teacher after this incident. I don't know if it was a pointless precaution against external danger or to make a stronger impression on the person we were talking to. He always had a student or a quiet colleague with him. But I must admit that, while the practice of keeping someone with him was noticeable in his own person, it was also widespread among our people as part of the culture.

"That practice called 'defiance.' Long before the "theatre," he enrolled his son in one of the community's boarding schools, which he considered "masters of education." We visited the school several times to see the boy and meet with his teachers. Compared to the state schools, which were crumbling everywhere, it seemed like the perfect place for his child's future. On that last visit,

the boy's indifference seemed unnoticeable. When we left, I wasn't surprised to hear a reproach from his son, his only concern. The giant man was disappointed and saddened by the unexpected indifference from his child. Meanwhile, from my seat, I saw the boy running after the car. I can't say I wasn't affected by this. The boy was far removed from his family and future, and he longed for home. I believe that most successful people pay this price for an unforgettable experience. But he, like many others, was oblivious to this behind the wheel.

My old friend concluded his remarks about him as follows. To understand him, here's what I can say about his children. The daughter followed her father's path to gain acceptance. The son, on the other hand, studied and became a doctor. His chosen profession required him to sacrifice himself for humanity, just as his father had sacrificed his life for ideology, in accordance with the Hippocratic Oath. Later, I realized that my old friend, with the experience he had gained among the ruins and the mindset of his friend, with whom he had maintained close contact for years,

He was describing two opposing theological views. He said that wherever he looked for love of Allah, he encountered fear of Allah. With one exception! . .

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Traces of the Past

I must say that the style of our old friend's conversations, which were a mix of humour and didacticism, jumping from one topic to another, and often losing the thread, was quite effective. When he didn't draw attention to the connections in his speech, it was inevitable that we would later engage in discussions among ourselves to figure out what he had said between the lines. That day, we clearly experienced this in the examples he gave from his own life about human relationships. Moreover, he dove right into the subject.

“We wanted to spend our days immersed in books in the peaceful, quiet environment of the department library until our hair turned white. But that was just a dream. When the day came, they graduated us and sent us on our way. I don’t remember exactly, but there was a principle that the school aimed to instil a kind of universal perspective. I can’t recall if it was written on marble somewhere in the school or if I read it somewhere else. And when we were thrown into life, which wasn’t written in books, we felt like fish out of water. We were ignorant of life, yet the love of learning was so strong that we were open to learning even from our students.

"Even though many years have passed, I don't remember why we argued, but I will never forget the ticket clerk at the station in a distant city saying, “What, are we bad people now? . .” My week-long journey by bicycle had come to an end. I felt an unbearable discomfort and drowsiness. The accumulated fatigue of that week was more than I could bear. I wanted to board the train that would take me almost from one end of the country to the other as soon as possible and, if possible, close my eyes where I was sitting. The ticket clerk had issued a luggage

ticket for the bicycle for a location further away than the destination station. I didn't think much of it. However, the next day, when I arrived at my destination, I realised that the ticket sales clerk was a bad person when the conductor refused to deliver the bicycle 50 km before the destination. Someone asked, ‘So, did you get the bicycle?’ Our old friend pretended not to hear the question.

“I have experienced this manifestation of status difference in human relations in other examples as well. When I felt it was pointless to ask the director of the tax office a question about my car tax, I realised that I was faced with a mentality that viewed citizens as potential tax evaders before I even asked the question. I felt as though I had been slapped. However, my exposure to such behaviour was not limited to this. During my car journey, when I was stopped for a check by traffic police, I encountered an unexpected behaviour from the young officer. He clearly asked for money for food. I was shocked. I took out some money and gave it to him. Since I didn't eat at the restaurant, I didn't know the prices. The police officer said it wasn't enough and increased the amount. Without hesitation, I paid the rest. Then I continued on my way. Although regulations introduced over time to police practices have helped prevent similar incidents, this situation remains one of those cases I cannot suppress or forget. There is no end to such incidents. It is even more surprising to see them in the civilian sphere. An experience I had at a bank regarding my business not being handled also ranks among the unforgettable ones. While the bank clerk was handling a friend’s business, my queue number appeared on the screen. Then the queue passed, and he only finished his friend’s business. When the clerk told me that my turn had passed, I lost my temper. At that moment, I thought I had

encountered a situation that I could only encounter in the private sector or in government offices.

“There were also interrogations. While taking photographs of historically significant buildings in the interior of the country with your camera, it was quite common for a curious passerby to approach you and ask, “What are you doing?” However, it was no longer common for a municipal employee to invite you to a workplace to question you about your suspicious behaviour. The police chief, who was reading poetry from outside, applied interrogation techniques that would put a security officer to shame, which was a successful example of “looking for a needle in a haystack”. Fortunately, my friends who had come with me stepped in and vouched for me, resulting in a disappointing experience for the police. I experienced a similar incident with a district governor.

I didn't laugh, but some of my friends couldn't help but burst into laughter.

“While producing programmes for local television as a hobby, the fact that officials would always interfere with my video recordings was causing serious problems for the work I was preparing. Finally, when the television manager obtained official permission from the province, things went smoothly for a while. However, when the programmes were broadcast to the districts, I shot myself in the foot. One day, when I visited the district governor in the district I was in, I told him I wanted to film a video about “historical values.” I had the document issued by the provincial governor's office with me. At that moment, I felt as anxious as if I were facing a prosecutor instead of the district governor.

‘This permit is valid for the city centre, not here,’ he said. Then he added, ‘I don't know you.’

“Disappointed and in low spirits, I left the district governor’s office. That day, I took the photos quickly, feeling scared. And as I left the district, I took a deep breath. Years later, when I looked up that district governor, I found out he had died of cancer.

“On different occasions, while searching for a location in the field or photographing stars in pitch darkness, I encountered the gendarmerie. By then, I was already pulling out my ID for a GBT check without being asked.

“When I began exploring a city renowned for its commercial acumen at dawn, I saw that an island consisting of several plots had been demolished in the name of urban renewal. However, what captivated me was that the few ruins still standing reflected the city’s historical identity. I photographed a few architectural details. I stopped at a neighbourhood mosque. The minaret’s balcony, surrounded by columns, reflected an identity dating back centuries and was about to disappear as part of a project aimed at making the city more livable and aesthetically pleasing. At that moment, an unremarkable person entered the frame.

There was another burst of laughter. Our old friend continued speaking without pause.

“There are some people who will not be persuaded no matter what you say. My suspicious appearance must have prompted him to intervene. He tried to involve a police officer who happened to be passing by in the unpleasant conversation. The officer, who was tired after a long shift and on his way home, did not even listen. When my companion failed to succeed, I had the last word. “The best thing to do is to take a souvenir photo!” Now, in front of the ruins of the historic city, which had been pushed

into the darkness of history, I pressed the shutter button to capture the moment without giving him a chance to adjust his clothes. I know I should have asked his permission.

“Don't think this is an exception. Let me give you a few more examples. On a train journey through the forests of the north, I was taking pictures from the corridor window. A young man at least twenty years younger than me appeared beside me. ‘You're spoiling the atmosphere here,’ he said.

“Of course, I didn’t understand what he meant at first. But when I looked back at the compartment he had come from, I saw a young girl surrounded by a few young men. Years later, I realized that there was always a grain of truth in that young man’s words. But the examples don’t end there.

We felt that we were approaching the end with a short break. I think our old friend was experiencing mixed emotions. I don't know if it was the emotionality of old age that had overcome him, or if he was experiencing the exhaustion of coming to terms with the past.

“I will give two examples about my students, from whom I have always learned something,” he continued.

“While working in a large district in the countryside, there were times when I found it difficult to understand the behavior of the local people and felt stuck between two worlds. The easy explanation that this was a place that had escaped being a village but had failed to become a city was not convincing. This place had a rich past, but it seemed to bear the traces of ancestors who had been driven from power. How could such a case, buried in the darkness of history and turned into a mystery, be explained in relation to today's problems? . . I came across

a few troublesome students from the school on a deserted road. They blocked my path.

“Teacher! . . We're going to beat you up.”

"At that moment, I realized the horror of what it meant to have burned my bridges. And one last example! . .

“That’s not a classroom. There are too many students, and they’re almost your age. You have no chance of establishing authority, and even if you fail, you can’t just beat a student in class to relax. Naturally, he had successfully pushed the limits of my patience. After class, I said, ‘Follow me.’ In an empty room, I struck his palm with a stick. He snatched the stick from my hand before the second strike! . . He struck his own leg three times in a row with brutal force. At first, I thought this was a defiant challenge, as if to say, “That’s not how you use a stick! . .” No! . . It’s not that simple at all.

This time, the silence lasted a long time. After such unpleasant memories, we asked our old friend to sing a song to liven up the atmosphere, but we couldn't have guessed that he would inevitably draw us into his own world and take us back to the past. Seriously, he said, “Your request reminds me of the ‘Diva of the Republic.’ Of course, to talk about her, I'll have to give a long introduction.”

Instead of a song to clear the rust from our ears, we reluctantly surrendered ourselves to a dramatic history lesson.

“In the country’s great war a century ago, as the enemy retreated, its inhumane acts of burning cities and massacring civilians were once again recorded in the

history books. In the city where I was born and raised, the screams of people trapped in the flames for three days were deeply engraved in the memories of those who remained. Gathering people inside a large building, often a place of worship, and then setting it on fire was just one of the war's ruthless practices. Those who managed to escape fled to the mountains, watching the devastation unfolding in the city with horror from behind the rocks or bushes where they hid. Three days later, when rescuers arrived, the people did not emerge for a long time, believing them to still be enemies. The fire site, still smoldering with smoke rising from the ashes, was visited by local and foreign observers, who took notes and photographed the disaster.

“In both countries, those responsible for the war or those who evaded military service were tried and executed, either with or without trial. A population exchange took place between the two countries. For many years, both sides suffered greatly as they paid the economic price of the war in their countries. However, seven or eight years later, hostility gave way to peace and good relations.

“The last fire of the war had occurred in the country's second largest city. About five years later, an exhibition was held on the site of the fire, followed by a fair, and then an international fair was opened on the expanded site. This fair played a role in broadening our horizons in our childhood. We were opening up to the world with pavilions from countries we knew nothing about except their names. Our imagination became more colorful, and we began to accept that there were other people living in this vast world besides us. Undoubtedly, the fairgrounds, which covered a vast area and were

officially opened each autumn by the country's leading government officials, were not merely advertising spaces for certain countries and organizations. The restaurants, the amusement park with its electric toys, the parachute tower where people could jump for a small fee, the casinos, the zoo, the botanical garden with all kinds of plants and trees, the large pools, and much more made it a place that attracted people of all ages. The zoo remained a focal point for visitors until it was separated from the fairgrounds in the early 21st century under the name Natural Life Park. The amusement park was so crowded that there was barely room to walk. The carousel, the haunted house, the chained chair (essentially a variation of a swing), the Ferris wheel, and the bumper cars were just a few of the countless attractions. This was a world where the fun lasted for forty days and forty nights, as in fairy tales. There was definitely something for everyone there. We would wander around for hours, pretending to be interested in the products on display in the pavilions, collecting lots of brochures, and then, late at night, with aching feet and exhausted, we would catch the last bus and head home to our nearby town.

“Every year, my grandfather, who came to visit us, would talk about a singer he met at a casino at the Fair with his friends, who completely enchanted him. I should mention that my grandfather’s world was far removed from art. However, when he saw the female singer commanding the entire cabaret on stage, he was so astonished that he stood there with his mouth and eyes wide open, unable to believe that such a voice could come from her. Even though he often didn't understand the words, there was something magical about her delivery that carried you away. She had a style that inevitably captivated you and a wide vocal range. After singing

heavy songs whose words he didn't understand, she would transition to upbeat pieces that energized the audience, transporting them to another world. When my grandfather learned that she mainly gave concerts in the country's largest city, he regretted not having met her before, even though they lived in the same place. The first thing he did when he returned from visiting us was to find out which nightclub the singer performed at. Then, naturally, he became one of the Diva's loyal and regular followers.

“The revelation of this legendary woman's talent was based on a master-apprentice relationship. Her fellow musicians were the first to notice the depth of her ability. It was enough for her to listen to a piece once to be able to perform it.

“When she was still a child, her age was increased so that she could perform on stage. With the notebook she kept, she quickly built up a wide repertoire. She chose songs according to the characteristics of her audience. If the regulars at the nightclub where she worked were prominent figures, she would perform classical pieces, but in nightclubs where the audience was mostly from the general public, she would sing more lively and upbeat songs. She performed not only within the country but also abroad, in distant countries around the world. Although she was not formally educated, the Diva created her own unique style, setting her apart from the master names of her time. Over time, she mentored many of the leading singers of the country's music scene.

He paused briefly. We all knew bits and pieces of this master artist's life story. But we had never encountered such a comprehensive presentation. Our old friend brought his stories to life.

"One night, an unexpected incident occurred on stage at the Fair Casino, where he was performing his art at the location of the cascading pool. In the middle of his song, a police officer stood before him. He was confronted with an order that left him stunned. The police officer said, ‘The Governor is waiting for you at the restaurant next door. He wants you to sing.’ He did not acknowledge the police officer or respond to him, but he spoke into the microphone he was holding so that the governor could hear."

“Governor! Governor! I am singing songs for my fans here. Remember that you are the governor and do not make such an offer to me.” I don't know if the audience applauded or if a cold wind blew through the air. But what happened next? . . The governor imposed a ban on him performing on stage at the Fair. This ban remained in effect for several years during the governor’s tenure in the city. When the city’s administrator changed, the ban was lifted. The Diva reunited with his fans waiting for him at the nightclub named after him.

“The professional career of the prohibitionist governor continued with a steady track record of success in various positions within the bureaucracy. Initially, after serving as an officer in the army, he studied law and spent many years in senior management positions in the bureaucracy in various cities across the country. He served as a member of parliament. He eventually retired.

“Many years after that unpleasant incident at the fair, one day, while on her way to cross from one side of the sea to the other in a boat assigned to her in the country's largest city, the Diva noticed a gentleman in distress at the pier. He also wanted to cross over, but apparently he was having trouble finding a boat. She

invited him, and the gentleman accepted the invitation, likely with mixed emotions. As the boat began to move, the man approached Diva and introduced himself, saying, “Madam, I am the former Governor R. Ş.” Then, with a sense of embarrassment he could not hide, he said firmly, “I wronged you in the past. I apologize for that. Please forgive me.”

“Diva did not remember who the man was, as many years had passed. That unpleasant incident from the past came back to her mind. And in response to his magnanimous apology, she behaved as one would expect a diva to behave. She said some comforting words, and somehow, they became friends. She invited him to the casino. Their closeness with the former governor continued for years from that moment on. However, while no one today even remembers the governor's name, Diva has secured her place at the forefront of our classical music, her name inscribed in gold letters.

A melancholy atmosphere seemed to settle in. The finale of such a magnificent life story should not have ended this way.

“The owner of that perfect voice spent the last years of his long life with his rich talent gone. He had a partial stroke and was stuck in a wheelchair. No doubt, what was even more tragic was that he lost his voice. Under doctor supervision, he was first admitted to a nursing home, but soon after that, he was hospitalized. He passed away 30 years after leaving the stage. The country's prime minister issued a traditional condolence message upon the death of this state artist.

Our old friend fell silent. There was a moment of silence. Then he continued his speech about the place and importance of music in human life with his memories.

“One day, while I was busy with flowers in the garden of my house, I heard a voice coming from the other side of the wall. The voice belonged to a girl around 12 or 13 years old. She was standing in front of a few sheep, singing a song to herself. The song, sung in a narrow vocal range and somewhat monotonously, had a refrain that repeated frequently, as if she were speaking in a foreign language, and I couldn't understand a single word. It seemed to go on forever. She was experiencing the same freedom she felt when playing, as if she were in control of her life, while singing. He was alone with himself. I saw this in an adult during a shopping trip. His behavior was much more assertive than the child's. Without caring what others might think, he began to sing softly as he filled his bag with vegetables, ignoring the few men and women around him. At first, I was taken aback. Then I realized I was jealous of his freedom. In his behavior, there was an open protest, like in protest music. He wasn't protesting the high cost of living. He wasn't protesting injustice. It was as if his protest was against the rules, against the system. His protest was against everyone who didn't protest.

Then he muttered, “Music as a means of expression,” he said. “Or art...”

One of us interrupted. “She is declaring her freedom by protesting.”

Our old friend agreed, “Exactly!” “And she is doing it by singing.”

“He seemed to be talking to himself. "Actually, the difference between Diva and the other two examples is clear. She was an artist. While performing her work, she made her audience feel ‘beautiful.’ That was her goal. In the other two examples, however, when they expressed themselves, others were not involved.

“Ten years later, Diva's heirs sought their legal rights. Their lawyers had probably found them and guided them as a source of income. A team of lawyers who followed the press, along with others, were researching any news related to the late Diva that they could use. Now, at any moment, one of Diva's fans could fall victim to fate. Indeed, my grandfather's admiration, which began eighty years ago, would eventually come back to haunt his grandson years after his death."

"I believe that my maternal grandfather's inexplicable passion for that magnificent voice continued until his death. I don't think my grandfather's son, my uncle, inherited this passion from his father. For he probably had no passion that was exclusive to any area of life. That's why I suspect that his inner world was closed and dull. But his son was different. Unlike his father, he was multifaceted and seemed to have a philosopher's curiosity about everything. He believed that his grandfather was strangely and inexplicably in love with that singer. This situation turned into a complex nostalgia in the grandson. After a long and turbulent life, he turned his grandfather's passion, which could not be turned into action, into something tangible. He decorated the walls of the small tea house he opened in his retirement with old photographs and newspaper clippings of the Diva, large and small. This retrospective was a look back at the past and showed the artist's development and change

throughout his career. He often framed the photographs he had enlarged. He thought long and hard about placing his grandfather's photograph among them. Finally, he decided that it would be meaningful and added that exceptional photograph to the panel. On the other hand, he began collecting songs sung by the singer. His pure and innocent collection grew richer over time. And again, it was clear that he had begun to specialize in this field without even realizing it. Now, among the few customers at the tea house, there were also those who came from afar and took souvenir photos in front of the wall with the photographs. These exceptional customers would listen to one or two songs on cassette, drink a cup of tea, and then leave, never to return.

“A lawsuit was filed with the Intellectual and Industrial Property Rights Court, claiming that “unfair profit and unfair prestige are being gained by using my mother's name.” It was alleged that the business had used the artist's visuals and songs without permission, and instead of showing respect for her memory, her name was being used for commercial purposes. The family argued that using the famous artist's name and image for commercial gain harmed her memory and was against the law. The lawsuit highlighted that the company had pursued a commercial policy by exploiting the artist's popularity. The lawsuit for moral damages was accompanied by a claim for material damages, with the lawyer requesting that the damages be paid with interest for 10 years.

"The court ruled on the basis of the expert's findings and awarded one-third of the amount requested by the heirs. Nevertheless, this amount was still too high for my grandfather's grandson. Indeed, following the court ruling, the family was left in a state of severe

psychological distress. He carefully placed the framed photographs on the wall and the newspaper clippings he had cut out into a box. He locked the door of the tea house, never to open it again. He walked along the coastal road for a while, carrying the box tucked under his arm. Then he sat down on one of the benches facing the sea. He lit a cigarette. His grandfather's passion had lost its meaning. He smiled bitterly. The inheritance he had inherited from him had lost its value. He slowly let the box float into the sea. He watched the waves for a while. Then he headed home.

Suluova,

February 11, 2025

Lost Years

"The years I studied at university were years when student and labour unrest came to the fore, when political instability prevailed, and moreover, when the order evolved into chaos. I will never forget this famous quote of Karaoğlan. ‘If you don't come down from the stands to the field, I'm afraid someone will come out, blow the whistle and say “the game is over, everyone go home”.’ As a matter of fact, no one came down from the stands, someone came out and blew the whistle. The game was over and everyone went home. The military coup took place and the events, in which more than ten people were dying every day, ended in an instant, as if cut with a knife. Everyone was happy about this. From then on, students and workers gave up their places on the stage to others.

As if giving a lecture, our old friend summarised that period, which was initially welcomed by the public.

"In short, after the coup, the constitution was amended with a very large participation, the state's power of control was increased, individual rights and freedoms were restricted. Political parties were dissolved, political bans were imposed on party leaders. Many writers, journalists and academics were detained and penalised. Freedom of the press was severely restricted. Torture, imprisonment and executions became synonymous with the coup period. There were dark days in terms of human rights violations. Military tutelage continued its influence in politics and social life for many years. The transition to a free market economy was accelerated. During the state of emergency, the country's relations with the West

strengthened, but domestic repression also led to international criticism.

On that day, our old friend was frequently making flashbacks in a chain of memories that at first seemed complicated to us.

"A few years before the coup, when I graduated, I had to find a job because my student loan payments have ended. . I went up to the editor-in-chief of the newspaper with a note like ‘The bearer is to be trusted’ and a strong backing like ‘The bearer card is my relative’. The man had an impressive personality with his gigantic appearance. He later became an MP and a minister in a government. I knew his brother from my university years. Interestingly, the younger brother had said in his fast days, ‘I am ashamed to have such an elder brother’, and for this reason he had changed his name to refer to the October Revolution. Later in life, the younger brother left politics and became an environmentalist. Then the eternal enmity between the brothers ended, they reconciled. And, recently, they passed away a few months apart.

"The owner of the workplace, it doesn't matter whether he shares their ideology or not, had completely handed over the management of his newspaper to a political party. Thus it became a vehicle through which only the voice of that nationalist, statist and conservative party could be heard. On that day, I quickly got to know two university graduates working in the proofreading service, who were sent back from the typesetting department to be re-typeset by correcting language mistakes in the articles. One of them, with his academic career, eventually became a lecturer and dean at various universities. Almost forty years later, during an epidemic

of anxiety and fear, I learnt that he had died in a hospital in a city far from his hometown.

"However, shortly after I took the job, the director of the newspaper changed and was replaced by a slant-eyed man. After the military coup, while everyone was arrested, he disappeared. It was only 30 years later, when he was arrested and imprisoned on charges of ‘membership of an armed terrorist organisation’ and ‘political and military espionage’, if I remember correctly, for other activities, that the rumours that he had once been an intelligence officer came true.

"About a month after I joined my unit to do my military service in the east, far away from the city, I was warned by some regular officers. A letter from the personnel affairs office informed the battalion commander that I had been ‘actively involved in left-wing activities’. This information did not remain secret. However, since the group of lieutenants I hung out with was conservative, it was not taken seriously by anyone except my unit commander, of course. Only he treated me as an “objectionable infantryman” until the day I was demobilised.

After a short break, our old friend, as if he was the product of a scattered mind, was talking about the big city he had visited again after many years, and I don't think he was exaggerating, but he couldn't help expressing the emotional aspects of his memories.

"In the provinces, when I used to recommend cities to my senior students for higher education, I used to emphasise the importance of this historical city with the following words. When you graduate from university, you get two diplomas. One is what your school gives you and

the other is what the city gives you. The old capital of the past is the favourite not only of poets but also of everyone indiscriminately with the boundlessness of its rich dreams.

"More than forty years ago, when I was a student and travelled around the city step by step, I used to imagine that I was living in a magical world. As life experiences accumulated, one by one the magic was broken, and whatever we call reality came to the fore as painful. However, the historical aspect of the city, which constitutes an exception, has preserved its place in our minds nostalgically.

"That day, as I walked the one-and-a-half kilometres from one end to the other of the street, which was closed to vehicular traffic except for a tramway that opened onto the famous square and kept the old times alive, I gawked at my left and right as if I was seeing it for the first time. I knew that this street had been named Freedom Street about 100 years ago. Although this name was given to express the liberation of the city from the enemy, it had always carried a different meaning for me. I used to think of the freedom of a mind free from prejudgements, as if this was an exceptional place representing a universal point of view. It was cosmopolitan. In a crowd of people of all types, it was a place that made you forget the feeling of loneliness in an incomprehensible way and, in fact, a place you would not want to leave.

"While I was immersed in these dreams and thoughts, I suddenly noticed a well-dressed, gentlemanly-looking, elderly but vigorous man in the crowd, who excited me as if he had met a friend. I followed him with my eyes for maybe ten seconds until he disappeared from sight, blending in with the crowd. I thought I recognised

him from somewhere. It is quite possible that I had never met him, but this face was not unfamiliar. I thought I would recognise him if I thought a little, but in vain! . . I couldn't recognise him.

As I was walking with a feeling of nostalgia, almost as if I was slowly returning to real life, I soon realised that a group of women and a smaller number of men were passing by me in the direction I was going. Interestingly, however, one of these women also looked familiar to me. In those few seconds I was struck by the determined expression on the woman's face. Her gaze was piercing, not recognising distance. As the group disappeared among the crowd, I forgot about the woman and let myself be intoxicated by the intoxicating effect of the street again. At the kiosk on the corner, I ordered a pressed orange juice that I couldn't drink when I was a student due to lack of money. I had fun for a short while in front of a couple of cinemas that still survived the passage of time. I got stuck in the shop window of a store whose fame has spread abroad and looked at the clothes on the mannequins for a while and lived the past with longing. Then, I let myself go again to the flood of people on the street, which was not at all disturbing for me. I confess, I was happy.

"This time, jumping from branch to branch, my attention was drawn to a crowd further on, towards the end of “Freedom”. I soon realised that the group that had passed me earlier had merged with others to form a crowd, where, in addition to the spectators and members of the press, there seemed to be a large number of riot police personnel. As I was trying to understand what had happened, I came across a third person who led me to suspect that I had a poor memory: a civilian behind the

policemen, probably also a policeman, who looked familiar to me. These successive episodes of not remembering the past must have been signs of old age, which I found difficult to accept.

Even though our old friend said so, none of us, as his relatives, could have even imagined his decrepit old age. Obviously, his commitment to life was based on an idea that almost sanctified life. Perhaps faith would be more appropriate. Still, I don't think he cared what we thought, he continued.

"The old woman, who had earlier attracted my attention with her expressive and eloquent expression, looked as if she was the leader of her group, but it was someone else who was reading the press release. ‘We come here when everyone else is running to the cemetery for their relatives,’ she said. "We have been sitting here for a long time. The world has heard our voice, this country has not heard our voice. Everyone visits the graves of their loved ones and leaves a carnation. Show us a gravestone. Show it to us so that we can leave our flowers on that grave."

"The journalists called them the “Weekend Mums”. They were members of a non-governmental organisation with almost thirty years of history. They organised sit-ins to search for their relatives who had disappeared in custody and for the perpetrators of unsolved political murders who would probably never be found. What was happening in my consciousness was a transition from the magical atmosphere of the city and the street to the horror of a dystopian world. Of course, I didn't like it at all. Although it is humourously said that we are a society with a “fish memory”, we probably needed to forget the evil in order to continue living. The thought crossed my mind that

those three people, whose identities I could not remember, had been pushed into my subconscious by such a mechanism. And it was true. Accompanied by a bitter feeling, I somehow remembered the woman.

"There are many different kinds of pain that human beings experience in life. But none of them can be compared to the pain a mother feels when she loses her child. And since we cannot put ourselves in her shoes, we can never understand this pain. The people who gathered here were persistently resisting an ideology that had turned into a monster, even though it told them that they could not gain experience.

"Her story was based on one of those events that have become commonplace with more than twenty thousand unsolved murders. However, this number was incomparably larger when compared to the events that were the prelude to the military coup some fifteen years ago. Our three days of life were being used as a tool for dirty political games that disregarded human life. The son, who was taken by the police to be brought back, did not return. The police told the family that he had no record. The body of the woman's son was found by villagers in the woods. His face was made unrecognisable so that he could not be identified. Although he was buried in the cemetery, he was identified and recognised. However, the perpetrators of the extrajudicial execution could not be found.

"As if by reflex, my eyes searched for the man I had seen behind the policemen. He was not there. I couldn't understand why I had forgotten who he was, even though he was so famous. However, he had been on the public agenda for months. Journalists had interviewed him many times, he had participated in programmes on many

TV channels, and he had made satisfactory explanations that had dispelled suspicions. In the words of a famous politician, he had “gone out of the routine”.

"In the name of the spirit of the law, he carried out extrajudicial executions. He was the perfect apparatus of those who put themselves in the place of the state. In his house there were numerous framed certificates of appreciation issued by his superiors after each operation. He was labelled as a hitman by some. The geography he grew up in was the geography of those who devoted themselves to the state like a sacred belief. He was a specially trained “operative”. In order to respond to terrorist activities in the country in a professional manner, a specialised department was established within the police force, just like the special warfare department that existed in the pre-coup army structure. The hitman became one of the legendary names of this department.

Our old friend paused briefly. There was an expression of disappointment on his face, reflecting the mood of the hero with whom he had identified himself.

"He felt strongly that he was left alone in the courts. And he cried out in rebellion. He made incredible outbursts. He saw the prime minister and the interior minister of the time behind all the unlawfulness they were experiencing and declared this openly and loudly. In the following years, the prime minister stayed away from politics as if he wanted to forget the allegations against him. The interior minister, on the other hand, was accused of being the leader of a criminal organisation in the unsolved murders case. His name was also mentioned in other cases of organised crime and corruption. He was tried and convicted on the charges of ‘forming a gang to commit crimes, not informing the competent authorities

about persons under arrest and detention warrants and abuse of office’. In the special prison prepared for him, he supposedly served his sentence in order to ease the public conscience. Prisoners were transferred to other prisons and thus he was allocated a private prison. A helipad was built in the garden of this residence and he often had the opportunity to meet private visitors. In this respect, he was reminiscent of the South American mafia leader Escobar. It is likely that the drug lord, who has been a terrorist in his own country, modelled himself on the leader of the organisation on the other side of the world in the construction of his personal prison.

After a short breath, our old friend moved on to someone who played a key role in a rather complex web of events.

"There were those who doubted whether it was really an accident or whether it had been planned. The facts revealed in a road accident confirmed the convictions that had clouded people's minds. Immediately afterwards, as it once did, events came to an abrupt end as if cut with a knife. The public outcry was so great that the government could not remain a bystander, lest the problem be glossed over and covered up. The most prestigious organisation was asked to report on the events. The report prepared by the Intelligence Service, which was criticised for the unqualified personnel it used, was not of a kind that would ease the public conscience. It was criticised that wrong and irrelevant issues were listed, people who had nothing to do with the incident were included in the report and an attempt was made to cover up the incident.

"In response, the prime minister took the initiative and assigned the Prime Ministry Inspection Board and stood behind it. This new report was made public,

although many parts of it were kept secret as state secrets. It was deemed satisfactory and it was said “The country is cleaning its bowels”.

At this point our old friend stopped for a moment. He looked thoughtful. ‘This was an opportunity to make some adjustments in the bureaucracy’, he continued.

"In this report prepared by the Mülkiyelis, a cautious language was used. While conveying opinions or messages in a careful, attentive and measured style, exaggeration, expressions that could lead to misunderstandings, or a sharp tone were especially avoided. Each word was carefully chosen to express the point.

"The main idea of the issue was illegal relations and it should have been handled as a whole. However, it was divided into parts, “drowned in details” and the essence and substance of the matter was overlooked, especially at the judicial stage. In fact, the attitude and behaviour of the bureaucracy was problematic. Organisations and administrators were often careful not to provide any assistance to the investigating inspectors under the pretence of an apparent openness and transparency. Working space, secretaries, telephones and vehicles were provided, but there was only reluctance to provide information. In the Ministry of the Interior and the General Directorate of Security it was evident that they were endeavouring to do their part with a show of enthusiasm. In the Ministry of Justice, despite the Minister's instructions, some issues were not examined. What was common to all of them was the careful behaviour of the institutions in forgetting their own shortcomings and blaming others. The soldiers, on the other hand, were completely silent. However, the

gendarmerie should have had a lot to say. Politics was not impartial either. It became unclear whether the problem was a national issue or a government issue. What was the problem? .

"The mafia leader, the woman accompanying him and the police chief were killed in the traffic accident, the only survivor was the MP. Unexplained weapons were found in the boot of the car. This photograph, which brought together politics, the mafia and the police force, was a document of pollution.

‘Over time, the gang issue had developed in two different directions within the borders of the country; firstly, the process of the organised crime syndicates led by Ö. L. T. becoming “mafia” on an international scale and significance, extending to the top levels of the state in foreign countries, and secondly, the groupings that could be called ’the group of the tie-wearers", which brought together educated and respected people, such as bankers, business people, bureaucrats and media representatives, who were not involved in armed activities and the use of force. In both cases, the principle that made grouping and sharing necessary was this. "Be smart. Don't eat alone. Share it. Otherwise, they won't let you eat this profit. They will make you vomit".

"Ö. L. T. had reached the level of infiltrating the bureaucracy and bribing public officials to get work done. However, he was murdered when he had reached the level of giving orders to public officials. Thus, the first American-type mafiaisation process in the history of the country, which was not afraid of the police, gendarmerie and judiciary, was left unfinished. While ‘Fındıkzadeli, the ’Finishing House Operator" had clearly expressed his preference to liquidate his gambling houses after a while

and become an entrepreneur who started making investments, buying factories and even establishing factories, he could not find the opportunity to realise his ideas. The halo around him was large and effective enough to make it unnecessary for him to have a bodyguard, to go out on the streets with three or five cars and to take measures to protect himself. As soon as he realised the unannounced precautions taken by his men, he reacted violently. This choice, which at first glance seemed imprudent, did not lead to his murder. The system that eliminated him was already strong enough to override any precautions.

"The second type of gang activity was the use and organisation of state power and authority itself, which was much more effective than the first. The monetary dimension of the events that took place in the banks exceeded the totality of mafia activities perceived by the public. And it was believed that it would not be inaccurate to recognise bank incidents as the accelerator of general contamination.

"At that time, supervision and regulations regarding the banking sector were quite weak. Issues such as capital adequacy, risk management and transparency were not sufficiently controlled. Some banks were making decisions that prioritised the personal interests of their shareholders. High-risk investment decisions and misallocations of loans were common. Privileged loans were granted to state-owned banks and some private banks under political pressure. These loans often turned into non-recourse debts and weakened the financial structure of banks.

"What happened when the state paid for the losses incurred as a result of the successful actions in the banking

sector by the close circle of the former Prime Minister and the former President, who were photographed with him, was, of course, nothing more than a transfer of wealth.

As if to alleviate the impact of this depressing picture he painted in dark colours, our old friend made a cautious turn that heralded the end of the dark days.

"Undoubtedly, the fog has lifted, the chaotic situation in the bureaucracy has largely disappeared with the measures taken by the parliament. The laws and measures taken regarding the economy have yielded results. The shaken reputation of the intelligence and security services and the bureaucracy in general has also been restored. . Of course, this did not happen immediately.

"A retired intelligence officer with his wife, a prominent lawyer, the partner of the mafia leader killed in the accident, a member of the parliamentary commission investigating the accident, a member of parliament, and others have been victims of a series of mysterious road accidents in connection with the investigation, as if by a cynical and cruel twist of fate. However, those who were in some way close to the criminal world must have thought that they could survive by gaining public visibility through writing books, setting up websites, appearing constantly in newspapers and on TV, so as not to go back to “who shot them”. This person could have been a fraudster who defrauded the prime minister, or a police officer or intelligence officer. We have seen that many people whose names were included in that report had resorted to this method. An official at the top of the country's intelligence realised that he was going to be arrested and defected to a country on the other side of the world. And then, in an unprecedented move, he turned the

confidential correspondence of his organisation into a memoir and published it on his website. Later, a police official followed the same path by writing a book and appearing on TV. Twenty-five years later, a mafia leader, repeatedly mentioned in the report, shook the country with his YouTube videos about the government of the day.

One of us asked, as if to draw attention to a deficiency in the picture. So, what was the situation of the Mülkiye in all this chaos? .

It was not easy not to get involved in such pollution, our old friend replied. "However, compared to the previous ones, I think that the visible face of the state, with its governors, district governors and others, was at least as clean as the military.

We were being crushed under the weight that was falling on us. Of course, there was more to be said. Our old friend concluded his story as follows.

"After the press statement at the end of Freedom Street, there was a sudden movement. Before we realised what was going on, it turned into a chaos. The police intervened with pepper spray and shields. Many people, including relatives of the disappeared, human rights defenders, journalists and representatives of political parties were detained. In the meantime, a tragicomic situation, reminiscent of black humour, caught my attention. In that turmoil, as the old woman went to the police car without resisting the riot police officers holding her by the arms, her superiors shouted from a short distance away. ‘Let her go’. ‘No, arrest me too’, she screamed, objecting to the young policemen releasing her.

"Finally, I also remembered the gentlemanly-looking man I had met a little after entering Liberty Street.

Twenty years after he had prepared the report, he told a newspaper, with a pessimistic outlook that implied that the country had missed an opportunity, that the press in those days should have pursued the case continuously until results were obtained. The retired civil servant was satisfied with himself. He had done his part. He was only sad for the country.

"I think there was no remedy for the anguish that gnawed at the special operations soldier's soul. Every moment he breathed, he was haunted by the ghosts of the people whose lives he had ended. It was as if he was with them and he was constantly having nightmares, unable to stop himself from gesticulating in a way that seemed meaningless from the outside.

Suluova 8. 4. 2025

T R E A S O N

While we were chattering about the mundanity of human relationships, our retired teacher folded the newspaper he'd been reading, left it on the table, and rose from his seat to approach us. We all turned into cats who'd spilled milk. He looked at us mischievously, then demanded an explanation, "Why are you silent? Speak up!" We glanced at each other out of the corner of our eyes, as if we were naughty children who had shared a crime. After a moment of glance, one of us spoke up.

"Teacher! . . . We can't understand how people exploit your good intentions."

“Me?! . . .

“No, teacher, not you, everyone.

After a short pause, he asked him to continue.

“So... what? . . .

“When we try to shop from familiar shopkeepers, they don't give us their goods at a lower price.

“Of course not. 'Business is one thing, friendship is another.' Snow is falling on the mountains you trust. And you're cold.

“We sit down, drink their tea, and have long conversations. When it comes to money...

“God created brothers as brothers, but He created their purses separately.

“Teacher, you're not taking our side, but...

“You have no room to be taken. The best thing is, let me tell you about a few Don Quixotes from our political history. Maybe then you'll stop making this issue a problem.

“We reluctantly accepted that we were in a difficult situation. It was clear that he was enjoying himself, even though he tried not to show it. The first of these is one of the rare, colorful figures in the country's political life. While the anecdotes about him reflect his witty personality, his seemingly exaggerated experiences reveal him to be the epitome of the chronic opposition. He was a perpetual oppositionist, opposed to everything, everyone, even himself. Even when he became a partner in power, he never abandoned his oppositional stance. He was the voice of the people. They called him the "Storm of the Steppe." He possessed a powerful oratorical voice. He extended his five and a half hours of uninterrupted speech on the parliamentary podium to eight and a half hours before the people. The government's efforts to silence him began even in parliament, and the regulation restricting MPs' speaking time curtailed this impertinent figure. At one rally, he observed the crowd for minutes, saying, "The government has banned speech, so let's have a good time before we ban looks." He was always a relentless follower of those in power. One government saw no harm in resorting to punishing him and his voters through completely inappropriate methods. The administration went so far in this regard that it achieved an event worthy of exemplary political history. It transformed the province that had sent this extraordinary politician to parliament into a district in an extraordinary act. After many years of a single-party era, while people were hoping for a transition to democracy, they argued with the foresight of a decade that nothing had changed. However, it was quite

interesting that he considered the military coup a legitimate coup despite his democratic preferences.

"Our leader, who spent hours reading parliamentary minutes, documents, papers, and newspaper clippings from the bag he always carried with him at rallies, and who explained political events and government policies to the public with jokes and popular analogies, admittedly contributed significantly to the acceptance of politics in the country and the formation of policies that favored the people. However, because his observations were not based on a political program and thought, the opposition line failed to become institutionalized and lasted after the transition to multi-party rule." He was an opposition for the sake of being an opposition. He was an opposition just for the sake of being an opposition. With his charisma stemming from a dry, unyielding stubbornness, he listened to no one. He thought big and made big mistakes. He was in politics not to gain power, but to remain an opposition, and no one was sure whether he was aware of this.

“The public's favor was limited to the rally squares and, incomprehensibly, wasn't reflected at the ballot box. He was aware of this. And he expressed it with his humorous style.

“However, he eventually came to hate politics, which he equated with the spirit of evil, saying, "I fell in love with Leyla, who thought she had no eye marks on her face, and she was called politics. I later realized that she had been married to forty thousand people before me."

“The funeral ceremony caused a huge crowd, attended by a huge crowd. Despite having left active politics 30 years ago, it was clear that she still commanded great affection among the people. However, in his internal

examination, as he juxtaposed disappointment and betrayal, I believe there was little room left for the latter. His life was not a manifestation of betrayal, but of profound disappointment. His flawed decisions were inevitably blamed on flawed judgment regarding matters he overestimated. No one could blame others for this. Even when he resigned from the party he founded, he fell victim not to betrayal but to disappointment.

Our old friend concluded his remarks about his hero with a brief and meaningful assessment:

"Years later, another party leader who moved in the same political direction and experienced the same emotions took her place on the political scene. However, just six or seven years later, this party leader, who died in a suspicious helicopter crash, visited him in the hospital before his death. He said the following to him: “My young friend! I want to forget and be forgotten. You run away, you lose yourself, you work, and in the end, you are left with your bladder.”

After saying these words, our old friend paused briefly. And then, while we were still reeling from his final words, he moved on to his second hero.

“His talents, intellectual knowledge, accumulated experience, and charismatic personality, along with the influence of internal and external dynamics, propelled our new man to leadership on his political path. He forged a bond with his citizens that would endure even years after his death. His name was written in stone. However, he could not become a transformational leader. Why?

“His intellectual side, his passion for art, and his elegant style contributed to his distinctive place in the political world.” The poems of the "poet prime minister," who aimed to embody the virtues of being a timeless, ever-preserving human being, were overshadowed by his

rally speeches. However, he also earned the title of the most assassinated leader in the country's political history. It is argued that these heinous attempts against him are a reflection of the deep conflicts and complex dynamics in the country's political past. While large-scale reforms, such as efforts to transform the economic and social structure in rural areas, were not the direct cause of the assassination attempts, they had the potential to create indirect effects, and this must have been perceived as a threat by groups seeking to maintain the status quo. However, his attempts to pursue an independent and upright foreign policy must have angered and mobilized those who would have tried to stop him. He was seen as an honest, moral, gentle, and humble leader, far from ostentation, and was described as one of the most knowledgeable and polite leaders in politics. He possessed the identity of a "dove," hovering in the air with the sound of his wings on issues of democracy and freedom. Karaoğlan, who integrated with the people with the importance he placed on peasants, workers, and laborers, was a source of hope. People were naming their children after him.

“However, he engaged in a Machiavellian act that is considered a dark stain in the history of the country's politics. He bought ten opposition deputies and gave them ministerial positions in the government he formed. This political move greatly angered the opposing party leader, who for a long time referred to him as "head of the government" instead of "prime minister," meaning "irregular," "gang leader," or "so-called leader." Criticism centered on whether such a bargaining was ethically and politically correct. While this incident demonstrated his pragmatic leadership in his political career, it also highlighted his sensitivities regarding political ethics.

While it damaged Karaoğlan's credibility in the public eye, it also demonstrated his talent for political strategy and his determination to form a government. Despite everything, the fact that he is remembered as a leader overshadowed by this event seems inevitably a twist of fate. Many years later, in an interview with him, he openly admitted that this action, known as the 11 Incident, was the “biggest mistake” of his political life.

“This politician's national policy initiatives, which pursue national interests, somehow evoke the famous knight attacking windmills with his lance. Yet, his life was a poem, and it began with these words: 'If, when everyone around you is panicking and they know the reason is you...'" "Finally, when he was abandoned, one by one, two by two, and all together, by his companions, whom he had walked alongside for years, I doubt he could find refuge from the unreliable, insidious, and hazy world of politics to the bright and hopeful world of art. . .

There was silence for a while. In his eyes, the people accepted their hero, with all his merits and sins. And he moved on to the third person.

"Probably, when Karaoğlan was mobilizing people in society, he lacked a strong historical base from the past. He was an ideological voice calling on them to take the reins of their destiny, an example of which had never been seen before except during the War of Independence. The magnitude of his success stemmed partly from this. However, our third hero was a representative of an older, ideological, and religious thought that existed in these lands. He had a strong base stretching back centuries. His supporters, and even those who were not, gave him the most appropriate nickname: Mujahid! . .

One of us could not restrain himself and issued a warning. "Teacher! . . We are having trouble following you. As always, he remained deaf.

“His political views were shaped by an ideology built on religious values. The struggle for religion to come to power was tantamount to the individual’s ‘debt of servitude’ to God. This ideology has always been a bureaucratic

He aimed to expand the sphere of influence of the rebel-controlled religion, ensuring it played a more active role in the country's social, economic, and political life, and placed fundamental principles such as justice, solidarity, and morality at the center of his policies.

However, his ideology, which focused on the ability to distinguish right from wrong, was unacceptable according to the system that defined the boundaries of religion. It was as if he was being met with this very pretext. The accusations centered on the records of unaccountable party expenditures. And this accusation has always remained with him, like an indelible trace of mud.

But he did not withdraw into himself. He once again demonstrated his ideological commitment and determination. Although isolated during this process, he never compromised his own stance and remained the leader of the movement. He argued against his former students who had left the party and founded a new political party that they had strayed from their ideological line and were under the influence of external forces. He viewed this separation as a betrayal and criticized them for weakening the party's core values. Two years after his sentence was commuted by the President, who had once been his student, he was re-elected as chairman of his party. However, he passed away just two months later, at the age of 85. His legacy had been plundered by his

students while he was still alive. After his death, the final act of this conflict was played out between his children.

It is hoped that this disappointment they experienced in the final stages of their lives must have been a unique experience, crowning the continuing development of their rich personalities. However, it seems that even though the Storm of the Steppe distanced them, the political charm and allure of Karaoğlan and Mücahit remained with them until the very end of their life stories.

'Walking History' fell silent as if it had run out of things to say. But we knew it was full. He always had something to say. We all unhesitatingly accepted that he was a keen researcher and observer. But the silence stretched on. Two of us left the table late in the night, silent on their faces, with the silence of a ghost. But the others had no intention of leaving. The first speaker, as if to lighten the mood and with humor, said, "We can listen to another sad story."

Our old friend replied, as if awakened from a slumber, "Ha! . . ." Then, as if starting mid-sentence, he added, "Since the eighties, when we were channeled, under the name of freedom, it's become like a festival held in honor of the Spanish guardian angel, with bulls unleashed, like a Mother's Day."

“Of course, Judas' kisses were flying in the air. But more, "E tu, brute?"

Our witty friend interjected. "Teacher! . . . Could you simplify it? . . ."

“During those poplar-like student years, we used to look for ways to take the exams of the professors whose classes we didn't attend. They would sign our attendance records and check our eligibility from there. The instructor looked at my notebook, which lacked the necessary signatures, and after a brief moment of breathless

hesitation, he signed it. If I recall correctly, I received a passing grade on the exam. He was an associate professor at the time, promising a future for the country not only in his field but also in other fields with his intellectual expertise. Just a few years after becoming a professor, he became rector of a university. However, a year later, in his new position, he died of a heart attack at what could be considered the spring of his maturity. He was undoubtedly a loss to the nation's culture. He had packed a great deal into his short life. In addition to scientific studies in his field, he was also interested in current events. Among the books he wrote, driven by his wide range of interests, were those on social problems rooted in the country's long history. He was also the editor-in-chief of a newspaper.

At this point, he took a short breath. His eyes looked back fifty years.

“As I recall, he had a sincere and outspoken personality, with a quiet and calm demeanor. However, he was not emotional, but rather focused on logic and analysis. He possessed a disciplined, hardworking, and intellectual nature. As one might expect, he was a scholar who questioned and deeply examined events.

“One day, he wrote a necrological article in the newspaper. I better understood the significance of this piece, which he wrote in memory of his deceased professor, thanks to an assignment given by another teacher. The text he asked me to transcribe was the deceased scientist's bibliography. It was such a long list that it brought to mind an anecdotal story. Legend has it that when a great philosopher or scientist passes away, their works are loaded on one side of a camel, and their coffin on the other. This is how a balance is achieved.

“An anecdote about his teacher provides an important clue to the late man's rich personality. He

seemingly single-handedly filled the intellectual life, which was extremely barren during the establishment of the new regime in the country.

“He broke many new ground with his works in philosophy, sociology, social anthropology, aesthetics, logic, history, fiction, and even poetry. One day, when asked why he was so distracted, he reportedly replied, "I have to personally prepare the sources for the work I'm going to write."

"Referring to my teacher's newspaper article, he 'worked with superhuman effort, without wasting a single moment.' He was someone who disregarded and ignored not only mental but even physical fatigue. His former students would tell of some of his work while commuting to the faculty by tram. Although he was someone who never fit in and constantly renewed himself, his sensitivity and irritability, along with the mindset of the difficult times in the society he lived in, pushed him into the shadows. His death effectively marked the end of an era in the philosophy of science in the country. Essentially, everything up to this point had been normal.

"Now, let's talk about another hero of ours. The famous and highly influential writer of our recent history, N.F. With his harsh and sharp style, he thoroughly deserved the title of "pencil writer." However, everyone will agree that his style was mild when compared to C.M.'s. Because in C.M.'s writings, the mastery of language was complemented by the richness of the content. N.F. appealed to the emotions, while our hero appealed to both emotions and reason... However, as fate would have it, the pen writer's influence on our recent political history was incomparably superior. I had never met C.M. in my life. I knew only from newspaper articles, books, and stories about him. It was as if he had stepped

out of a Far Eastern legend and landed right in the middle of the country... His admirers would probably have nominated him for World Cultural Heritage if it had been possible. It must have been a stroke of luck that he came across my teacher's article and wrote something truly unwriteable himself. "We owe respect to the living and truth to the dead," he declared, reminiscent of Kiramen Katibin. He went on and on. He made the deceased a deceased. And frankly, no one dared to approach this polemic. N.F. also tried the dead, who couldn't defend themselves, in an imaginary court in which he was the prosecutor. But, if I remember correctly, C.M.'s truth remained unanswered.

"What does this mean now?"!...

Our old friend smiled strangely. We couldn't comprehend how meaningful and influential a polemic from half a century ago could have been. But he, on the other hand, was a rather complicated matter for us. This made the problem even more inextricably complicated.

“About 100 years ago, someone developed a concept using the word "treason" specifically for the intellectual segment. In his work, the author criticized intellectuals' abandonment of their quest for universal morality and truth, surrendering to political ideologies or pragmatism. According to him, the fundamental duty of intellectuals was to defend universal values such as justice, truth, and reason, independent of time and place. However, he observed that the intellectuals of his time, for various reasons, deviated from these ideals and entered the service of political and national interests. Fifty years later, this concept came to life in our country through accusations between members of different political views. The concept generally referred to the situation where those considered intellectuals used their knowledge, talents, and

social influence in a manner contrary to universal values, ethical principles, or the ideals they defended. This expression was used to criticize intellectuals who remained indifferent to social problems, aligned themselves with those in power, or compromised their principles for their own interests. Remember the saying attributed to the Prophet. “The worst scholars are those who visit emirs, the best emirs are those who visit scholars.” Nationalist and conservative segments viewed left-leaning intellectuals as “disconnected from the people,” “admirers of the West,” or “representatives of foreign ideologies.” According to these segments, intellectuals were committing “betrayal” by disdaining or completely ignoring the country’s culture, traditions, and religious values. On the left, this term was more commonly used for intellectuals who compromised with the system or distanced themselves from revolutionary ideals. In other words, intellectuals who supported the status quo or served the bourgeoisie instead of defending the interests of the people were criticized. The silence of intellectuals or their avoidance of responsibility in social crises was also seen as a form of “betrayal.” Alienation, blindly embracing Western-centric ideas, or rejecting local culture were criticized, especially in conservative segments, as “imitation of the West.” These criticisms were not only criticized but also demonized. "I think my professor, by sometimes remaining silent and not responding, didn't stand behind his condolences. Is it the duty of his students, fifty years later, to defend the demonized? But the criticism was also connected to an 'Ad Hominem' in this respect.

A fake cough was heard from our humorous friend. He obviously seemed to be asking for an explanation. But this time, our old friend explained.

"In other words, he hit below the belt with his criticism. His attitudes and principles were criticized with criticism."

Along with this, there was a heavy attack on his personality. "We owe him the truth," he declared, considering it his supreme duty to reveal what a traitor he was. Instead of this "library rat" taking to the streets and declaring, his silence was proving that he supported the status quo, that is, the policies of the government. He was a wretched Western imitator who had alienated himself from his own culture by focusing on abstract theories instead of understanding the problems of the peasantry or working class. And instead of being the conscience of his time, he chose to betray thought by sheltering in the so-called nobility of thought in his ivory tower.

"Yet, the victim, in its simplest form, rejected from the outset the use of thought for instrumental purposes, such as serving a particular ideology, securing a personal advantage, or manipulating others. He went beyond seeing thought as a tool, a step, or a method, and accepted that thought had a value in itself. He targeted the act of thinking for its intrinsic value, explaining things as they are, not as they should be, rather than as they should be.

"However, there was a disturbing aspect. I sensed an incredible audacity in this polemic. The crime, accused of insulting the victim's personality, was being committed as if it were being criticized. The deceased was betraying himself by abandoning the universal morality and search for truth expected of him during his lifetime and failing to act in accordance with political ideology. It was as if, through a dishonest game of reasoning, he was a traitor for not betraying. Furthermore, in the same article, the author also acted as a mentor to my professor, acting as a kind of elder brother, a guide for how he should act. This approach

was nothing more than a more direct and blatantly rude expression of the "if I were you" rhetoric, a phrase I have never forgiven in my life.

He fell silent. But he hadn't finished the story, nor had he yet spoken his final words. We were looking into his mouth. Today, streets, cultural centers, libraries, schools, and awards are named after C.M. and N.F. in various cities across the country. In recognition of C.M.'s contributions to the intellectual world, several educational institutions and research centers also bear his name. However, there is no clear precedent for "deceased" or "deceased" in concrete areas.

Our old friend smiled bitterly.

"Betrayal has never been so cheap. Unfortunately, in that final blow, when you can no longer retaliate, you realize who the traitor is. You can accept disappointment in some way. However, accepting betrayal isn't easy... not easy at all."

Suluova
12.05.2025

Doctor

As we showed interest in our newly appointed colleague, who would feel at home and easily integrate into the community, our retired professor came to mind like a lifeline. We found him in his usual corner at the local restaurant, reading his newspaper. Driven by our close friendship, we immediately surrounded him, introduced our new friend, and asked him to tell us about the region. Being local, we naturally assumed he would share his knowledge. When he began speaking with his broad perspective, we quickly realized our mistake.

"What makes a place valuable are its inhabitants," he began. As the old saying goes, "A place derives its honor from the people who inhabit it." I don't know how true this saying is. Even before our ancestors arrived here, books were written about the fertility of these lands. People, drawing on the richness of this land, with its gardens of all kinds of vegetables and fruits, formed numerous small settlements in the plains and on the mountainsides from the foothills to the summits. A geographer of two thousand years ago described this multitude with the fabled term "a thousand villages." However, certain sections of the valley, through which a stream flows, occasionally became wetlands due to the low elevation and heavy rainfall. Furthermore, some court records recorded in the court records concerned violations of water use. The abundance of water, however, was appreciated by the farming population, leading them to prioritize rice cultivation among their crops. Thus, the locals boasted that the country's highest quality rice was grown in this region. However, a century ago, one of the major problems the new regime had to solve was related to this issue.

My friend next to me asked in surprise, "Was it about rice ? !"

I couldn't tell if our teacher smiled faintly, but his answer to the question wasn't immediate.

"Efforts to reach the level of modern civilization had begun a century earlier, but the decade before the regime change witnessed heavy wars, where those who had left, the subject of lamentations, never returned. Therefore, the issue of deserters was a prominent political problem. It wouldn't be wrong to liken the country to a smoking ruin when the war ended. The newly formed new administration faced a society that had lost its workforce due to epidemics and poverty. During the reconstruction process, more than eighty gangs challenged the authority, along with elements that occasionally attempted rebellion, making it necessary to take security measures. However, the general public health problem posed a serious obstacle to the country's future, economic development, and progress. In this story, linked to the legend of the phoenix rising from the ashes, I see many virtually nameless heroes who dedicated their lives to society.

He took a breath before continuing his story about the rice we'd forgotten.

“The wise leaders of the young Republic understood the gravity of the problem. They had experienced firsthand that the number of deaths in wars could not be compared to the number of deaths from epidemics. When faced with the fact that almost half the country was sick, they did not hesitate to appoint a completely unconventional, transparent individual to lead the problem.

“This man always had his sleeves rolled up. He used the vast knowledge and experience he had gained during the old regime in the service of the new regime, whose founding he had actively participated in, until his last breath. For him, it was 'Salus populi suprema lex esto'. In other words, 'The health of the people is the supreme law.'

“He went down in history as one of the rare figures who combined his medical identity with statesmanship. However, he was an exceptional figure in difficult times that could overcome him. He had no time to waste and, first and foremost, drew the country's health map. Every undertaking required planning and

long-term efforts. He demonstrated remarkable performance in vital matters such as the resettlement of nearly two million migrants, the rehabilitation of the wounded, the fight against epidemics, and social problems. In a relatively short period, the number of physicians, nurses, midwives, and health officials doubled. The ministry's budget constituted a significant portion of the poor government's budget. Health-related laws and regulations were drafted and enacted to establish the legal infrastructure. In short, the foundations of the country's health system were laid during his term.

He paused for a moment to catch his breath.

“In the early 1920s, many infectious diseases, including malaria, tuberculosis, syphilis, trachoma, typhoid, dysentery, and leprosy, were rampant in the country. Wars, massive migrations, and population movements led to an increase in the diversity and rate of spread of epidemics. A long-term, extensive, and challenging struggle was waged nationwide against epidemics. Malaria, of these diseases, had been a major scourge since ancient times, flaring up in periods of adverse factors such as war, social unrest, and economic collapse, inflicting immense damage on humanity. Not only ordinary people but also kings, popes, prominent figures in society, and even cities and kingdoms fell victim to malaria.

“During his ministry, seventeen million people were screened for malaria, and five million were treated. Seven tons of free medicine imported from abroad were distributed for this purpose. Again, during the same period, as part of the fight against the disease, 1,000 km of water drainage channels were opened and 350 square kilometers of swampy land were dried, including this geography in which we live.

“Trachoma, a long-known disease that causes blindness, was a major health problem in the early years of the Republic's founding. It was said that almost half of the population in the southeast had contracted the disease, and that towns had become "towns of the blind." Trachoma hospitals were opened. Initially, the number of trachoma cases treated was around three thousand, but within twenty years this number had reached 120,000. Through intensive treatment efforts, the rate of new

cases among those examined was reduced to almost one-quarter.

"Within twenty years of screening conducted by the Syphilis Control Teams, approximately 2,250,000 people were examined, and 86,000 of them were found to have syphilis.

"Smallpox cases among refugees in 1929 and 1930 caused epidemics in some parts of the country. Consequently, a major fight against smallpox was launched. As a result of the control of border crossings and intensive vaccination and treatment efforts, smallpox was completely brought under control within a few years.

“Cholera epidemics that broke out in neighboring countries were prevented from spreading to the country through measures taken. Following a cholera outbreak in the Far East in 1939, 1 million doses of cholera vaccine produced in the laboratories of the Central Hygiene Institute were sent to China.

“During the War of Independence, difficulties were encountered in vaccination and treatment efforts against rabies in the country. To find a solution, a colleague who had previously worked at a treatment center during the war was sent from the new capital to the imperial capital at his direction. This intrepid man secretly procured an infected rabbit from the doctor in charge of the treatment center in the ottoman capital. By transferring it from one to another and evading the pursuit of the British police, he brought it to the new capital, thus establishing the first rabies-related institution there. Later, in the early years of the new regime, rabies dispensaries were opened in various cities across the country. Additionally, numerous "Rabies Vaccination Stations" were established in various regions of the country.

“When he was offered the prime ministership by the President, he accepted it on the condition that he would not 'take the country to war unless absolutely necessary.' During his tenure, earthquakes and floods, which caused great loss of life and devastated the entire region, shook the country to its core. With the outbreak of World War II, and driven by military experience and a determination to stay away from war, partial mobilization was declared in the country, and more than a

million young working-age people were conscripted as a precaution.

"As a requirement of the principle of 'Populism,' one of the regime's ultimate goals, he prioritized the implementation of the principle of 'Etatism.' Despite the economic hardships brought about by the war, investments in public health and medical education contributed to the strengthening of the country's social state structure in the long run.

“However, under the harsh economic conditions brought on by the war, a law was passed granting the state extensive powers to intervene in the economy. This law granted the government the authority to seize people's property, regulate prices, increase working hours, and abolish holidays. However, a shortage of production equipment, transportation, and import restrictions disrupted the supply-demand balance, leading to problems such as inflation and black marketeering. The war-induced deterioration of the country's economic situation reached unbearable proportions for the people. With the outbreak of the war, the country's economic infrastructure was inadequate, prompting the government to take radical measures. Furthermore, the excesses and abuses in its implementation led to widespread public dissatisfaction. This was an unfortunate example of how well-intentioned policy can lead to negative consequences due to inadequate implementation and oversight. While the law made the country adequately prepared for war, its consequences were disastrous for the people. Food was confiscated from the people, at the risk of starvation, but due to incompetent collection and storage, this food rotted on the roadside or in warehouses. The public's perception of this fueled their anger at the government, blaming it for everything that had happened. Some civil servants and party leaders abused the law, selling vehicles, property, and foodstuffs they had seized from the public to themselves, and by collaborating with hoarders, they had profited materially at the public's expense. This situation undoubtedly eroded public trust to its core.

“Naturally, when the government seized food and consumer goods, prices soared, and the black market became widespread. Eventually, rationing began for basic food items

like bread and sugar. The black market could not be stopped, and the government failed to combat it. But all else aside…

“He was one of those who knew well how close death was to people, and his premonition told him that the Angel of Death, whom he always encountered for others, had finally come for him. With the kindness of his soul, he asked his assistant to "call a doctor without causing a stir." However, the doctor, who arrived shortly thereafter, saw there was nothing he could do. The state had lost its man. I don't know if he ever felt peace in his life, but I imagine he found peace, even if only for a moment, as he passed from that state of tranquility, still aware of what was happening around him, into eternal sleep.

“Naturally, the country plunged into mourning. Flags were lowered to half-mast. State dignitaries and a large crowd attended the ceremony. Following the funeral prayer, his body was brought to the Ministry of Health. Following the final ceremony there, he was buried in his final resting place in the Asri Cemetery.

We held our breath for a brief, deathly silence. It may have lasted only a few seconds. But for some reason, it seemed long to us.

“He placed great importance on the sciences of preventive medicine and public health, and on imparting the knowledge gained through them to the nation's physicians and applying them in the field. The name of the Central Hygiene Institute, his dream and greatest achievement, was changed by law after his death to include the name of the late Prime Minister. However, nearly ninety years after its founding, the institute's closure, following long-standing administrative, technical, and financial difficulties, resulted in the loss of a long-established public health institution in the country and a serious weakening of its capabilities through the loss of its memory in the field of preventive health. In other words, not only was an institution closed, but Hygieia's cup was overturned, Panakeia's elixir dried up, and Asclepius' staff was thrown to the ground.

“His ability to empathize with his patients, expected of a doctor, had expanded into empathy with an ailing society, a quality that expanded upon his becoming a statesman. My young mind cannot grasp what this was like. The ability to understand patients' pain and concerns, and to approach them with compassion, has now spread to embrace all people in the country, suggesting a mature state of mind that can only be encountered in this profession, but is inconceivable.

Silence continued until our new friend excused himself and left us.

In the text of Hippocrates' oath, we see a goal whose very existence lies within itself. However, just as private healthcare institutions, which erode this oath through the dilemma of wallet and conscience, exploit the state's desperate need for healthy generations for the sake of its population policy, so too does the state's need for healthy generations. The relationship between health policies implemented in the first decade of the Republic and population growth provides a concrete basis for the statement, "In ten years, we created fifteen million young people of all ages." The phrase "fifteen million young people" represents the new generation born during this period, who managed to survive and grow up healthy. This meant not just a number, but also the revitalization of the country's human resources potential and the flourishing of hopes for the future. In this context, this verse from the anthem emphasizes the demographic strengthening that emerged as a direct result of healthcare services.

"The population had drastically decreased, and life expectancy had shortened due to epidemics, malnutrition, war, and migration. For the newly established Republican regime, a healthy and strong population was vital to the country's reconstruction and development. A strong national defense and a strong economy needed healthy generations. And a robust healthcare system was essential for healthy generations. I can't help but admire how successfully he combined his roles as statesman and health care provider without conflict.

“It wouldn't be wrong to consider the "celibacy law" proposals, which were occasionally put forward like a hot

potato and received strong cultural support, as part of the population policy of the time. The fact that absurd proposals, such as taxing men and women of marriageable age if they were single, were put forward could be considered a sign, to put it humorously, that the MPs of the time weren't entirely idle. Meanwhile, in the last 10 years, there has been a 71 percent increase in the number of people living alone. The government is still implementing measures to encourage marriage.

As far as I know, our retired professor didn't have a completely statist or liberal perspective, which evoked a similar dilemma. He simply considered human health indisputable, attributing it to its sacredness. His former analogy with Prometheus tragically reflected the fact that he received his reward not from Zeus, but from the people to whom he brought fire. It was undoubtedly inevitable, as always, that he would bring the issue to the present day. And indeed, that's what happened.

“Last year, during my time as a hospital companion, I worked closely with patients, nurses, and doctors, and came to know that world a little better. The respect I felt for the healthcare professionals, who, during long working hours, rushed to relieve the suffering of patients with an unflagging energy, as if they never tire, ensured I never despaired of humanity. The doctor I had encountered there as a relative also lived across the street from my temporary residence. We had met him in the hallway a couple of times and exchanged greetings. He was middle-aged. Occasionally, opportunities arose for conversation, even with flimsy excuses. Realizing he was studying German, he occasionally found an excuse to exchange pleasantries.

‘"Guten Tag, Wie geht es dir?"

He'd respond with a faint smile.

"Mir geht es gut. Wie geht es dir?"

A slight nod. Of course, that was all.’

“Violence against healthcare personnel has existed everywhere and always, but never has it been as widespread as it is today. However, while visible measures were being taken in foreign countries, doctors' social media posts revealed that these

people were left remarkably unattended in our country. Far from taking measures against violence, the government, along with its representatives, occasionally made statements and actions that gave the impression of encouraging discrediting them. On the one hand, accusations bordering on treason against those leaving the country were circulated side by side with statements from representatives encouraging the strangling of doctors. An incomprehensible mindset that explained the freedom we had achieved at the time by "beating doctors" was finding expression in a peculiar segment of society.

After this revealing information, our old friend turned back to his hero.

"But I could sense his hesitation, his uncertainty about whether to leave. He was resolute. And I was clearly having a hard time accepting the hesitation I felt." These people, as is likely the requirement of their profession, would have assessed every aspect of the situation, made quick decisions, and taken immediate action. But despite his foreign language skills, he harbored a certain uncertainty. It was inevitable that the healthcare system would suffer from the preferences of doctors migrating abroad, and this was happening. Blaming them for this was completely unfair.

Our elderly friend continued to talk about his experiences during his hospital days.

“That night, I felt a deceptive monotony, a déjà vu I'd experienced in the past. I realized my patient had fallen asleep in the dim light and the brief interval his suffering somehow allowed. Looking out the door into the corridor, I felt a sense of dread that an ominous scream would shatter the silence of that restless night at any moment. I don't know if it was just me. But I immediately realized that the cursed sound was real, and the source of the problem wasn't the palliative care unit for the hopeless in the long corridor I was in. The sounds were coming from quite a distance, but I couldn't tell what they were. The source of the incessant shouting and noise was probably the emergency room on the ground floor. It couldn't be any other way. I turned and looked at my patient again. He was asleep,

lost in a pendulum oscillating between peace and restlessness. I quietly and quickly crossed the endless corridor and reached the stairs between floors. The police had arrived and intervened in the clash just moments before. They were checking IDs and releasing the patient's relatives. Less ahead, I saw the doctor, his face pale. His seemingly calm demeanor and movements still lacked any apparent determination. Returning to my patient without delay, I found him just as I had left him, in a restless sleep, the sedatives having worn off.

One of us chimed in, demonstrating that he wasn't indifferent to the issue.

“Thousands of countless healthcare workers are subjected to violence all over the world, at all times. These incidents often stem from long waiting times, misunderstandings, or dissatisfaction with treatment outcomes on the part of patient families. The pandemic played a significant role in the rise of such behavior. Economic hardship, social tensions, and general intolerance make healthcare workers easy targets. Furthermore, the lack of deterrent or swift enforcement of penalties for violent incidents can also encourage such behavior.

Our elderly friend nodded in agreement and continued his speech.

“You are absolutely right. The emotional distress, fear, or helplessness experienced by patients' families can sometimes turn into unjustified anger toward doctors. However, despite the profession's ethical idealism, burnout syndrome caused by harsh working conditions is also inevitable. I don't think the doctor I mentioned underwent an internal transformation or gained new meaning in his profession after this experience. It's likely he simply reviewed the changing conditions.

Our colleague, who interjected earlier, demonstrated his expertise in this area by shifting the conversation to private hospitals.

"Better living conditions and a lower risk of violence abroad, as in your example, encourage them to learn the language. Low salaries and harsh working conditions, especially for young doctors, make private hospitals attractive

first, and then abroad. Private hospitals offer higher salaries, lower patient loads, and better working conditions. Furthermore, the lower reporting of violent incidents gives doctors the perception of a safer environment. It's argued that violence leads doctors to move to the private sector, but this reduces the quality of education and creates specialization problems due to the migration of experienced doctors." The more controlled environment and lower patient volumes of private hospitals are seen as factors that reduce the risk of violence. Consequently, these violent incidents left doctors feeling helpless and triggered a search for a safe work environment.

I could tell I felt the topic was drifting apart. I felt some questions were left unanswered. Granted, the situation in private hospitals was a social reality, but the flow and coherence of the conversation had been disrupted. I was curious about the situation of the patient and the doctor. However, I didn't have the opportunity to ask our elderly friend these questions, which were ingrained in my mind, until later.

“With the changing economic system following the 1980 coup, the number of private hospitals has increased dramatically over the last 20 years. These hospitals generally cater to higher-income groups and may require out-of-pocket payments, except for services contracted with the Social Security Institution (SGK). This can lead to a more "elite" profile for patients and their families. Appointments in private hospitals are shorter, waiting times are shorter, and time allocated per patient is more. However, violence is often portrayed as non-existent in private hospitals, but the reality is otherwise. Incidents in private hospitals are either underreported or remain hidden from the public for fear of protecting their brand image.

Our old friend seemed to be murmuring a situation no less than a harbinger of dystopia.

“Factors such as healthcare reforms and overcrowding in emergency rooms have emerged as triggers for violence. According to Ministry data, thousands of healthcare workers are subjected to violence every year. The number of doctors who

have received good conduct certificates and emigrated has increased 40-fold in the past decade. Healthcare workers were found to be 16 times more likely to be subjected to violence than those in other professions. Today, migrations continue due to despair, burnout, and insecurity. This reality, contradicting the spirit of the ideal, is like a blank page on a white coat. It's as if the pain of violence were the sparks of cruelty that manifested itself in the institutional darkness, where a mechanized lack of empathy has become a heartless routine.

Suluova, July 22, 2025

J u r i s t

“When Grandfather married the daughter of a family that included an ‘artist,’ he held an important position in which he prioritised the interests of the state. His wife's artist brother, who had his head in the clouds, probably clashed with his cold and serious demeanour. For this reason, their uncles always remained a point of reference in the children's education. The Ministry of Finance, rest assured, is one of the most influential faces of the state, at least as much as the police force. While serving as a district prosecutor, he had three children. These children grew up and, like their father, all three attained important positions in society. One became a doctor, another a civil servant, and the third a doyen of the country's judiciary.

Although I joined the group late, I felt that I hadn't missed much. It was impossible to predict where our old friend would take us in the background of a family history. If he mentioned his grandparents, it meant that it would be a story spanning a century. When I heard that the doctor was the same age as the Republic, I realised that I was right.

“Unlike his siblings, he can be described as multifaceted. He didn't confine himself to the strict rules of his profession, which required strict discipline. He followed developments in the world of medicine and published a professional journal. However, he was not satisfied with this alone. He wrote poems and satires that were published in various literary journals. These were later compiled into books starting from the age of 20. The pen name he chose for himself as an artist represents a carefree poet who prioritises aesthetics and poetry, remains unaffected by worldly concerns, interests, or criticism, and stays true to his inner voice and artistic sensibility. Nevertheless, it cannot be said that he stood out in the field of literature.

“While his brother, who was a civil servant, was working as an undersecretary at the Ministry of Tourism, he quit

his job as a doctor due to an irregular appointment and entered the tourism business, and in a short time he began to be known as a ‘tourism expert,’ as if he had forgotten his original profession. Around this time, the younger brother, a professor, was breaking ice in the prison yard with his assistant, using a pickaxe. Speaking of which, let's say a few words about the middle brother, a civil servant. During his last ambassadorial post, he reported to the capital, to the ministry, that a diplomat at his embassy had an affair with a Soviet diplomat. However, when that person was not dismissed, he, like his older brother, made this a matter of prestige and voluntarily retired. After his ambassadorship, he taught history at the Air Force Academy for a time.

“If we say that the doctor inherited his womanizing ways from his mother's artist brother, I'm not sure if we're going too far. However, he was married six times. He received alimony from his first wife, his second wife cleared out the house before they divorced, and he couldn't remember why he separated from his third wife. His fourth wife was an actress at his uncle’s theatre. He had his longest marriage with her. He went on his honeymoon with his fifth wife in America, and had his last wife’s wedding dress made in Hong Kong. He was afraid she would kill him.

“His analysis of his personality, in terms of revealing the complexity of the human soul, doesn't seem at all easy to me. Changing his profession as a doctor, which is indisputable, at an advanced age, is not something that can be easily explained. At first glance, it seems like an artist's rebellion against society and life with its established rules. Was he captivated by the inexplicable magic of art's freedom and boundlessness? And if so, then his mother's brother played an unforgivable role in this. His influence on this man was evident even when he pulled his son's ear. In his memoirs, his son recalls, “When my father saw my grades slipping in middle school, he would say, ‘Son, are you going to be a man, or should I give you to your uncle to make you an actor?’” By the way, let's quote the uncle. ‘Theatre is “like.” Even if you're

playing a dirty beggar, you'll first get a shave, wash your face and eyes, then get dirty with makeup and become a beggar.'

It was time for a short break. Our old friend's furtive glances hovered over us with an indefinable uncertainty that I cannot describe as sly. When he spoke, everyone fell silent, but it was not so much what he said as what he did not say that echoed in our minds. His silence was a kind of strategy; no one could know what was going through his mind. This ambiguity was not a threat, but rather an invitation: a labyrinth for those who sought to understand, a wall for those who judged. As I pondered the intent behind his final words, I eventually accepted that I could not make sense of it. However, I did not expect him to offer any explanation. When he spoke again, the conversation took an unexpected turn.

"The 78-year-old retiree, who lived alone in his flat, had left his television on since Friday and had not requested any service, which caught the attention of the building's caretaker. Upon receiving the report, the police arrived at the apartment and entered through the door, which they had opened with a locksmith. They found the body of the elderly man, whose feet were wrapped in a sheet and whose hands were tied behind his back with a tie. The police's initial investigation determined that the victim had been strangled to death. It was clear that the elderly man had put up a fierce fight with his killer, as there were wounds on his elbows.

"There was no sign of forced entry at the door. This strengthened the possibility that the killer was someone familiar to the victim. The profile of the victim was immediately established. The victim was a well-known the travel entrepreneur. One of his brothers was a criminal law professor, the other a retired ambassador. His son was a theater and film actor. The victim had been married six times. Four months earlier, in an interview with a newspaper, he had revealed that he was in the process of divorcing his sixth wife and had said, 'She has her eye on my property. She is waiting for my death.'

“There was a safe in the house. However, there were no valuables or money inside. According to information obtained from his relatives, he had a ring and a necklace. This meant that the suspect or suspects had taken them. His immediate circle was investigated. All his relatives were examined one by one. His brother, who was retired from the civil service, had recently suffered from a serious illness. His younger brother was abroad for an international conference. His son was hosted by the police for a day or two. There was a pending divorce case and a statement made in the past. Of course, all these claims were being investigated. Everyone who had visited the house was identified one by one. And one name suddenly caught attention. A cleaning woman had been visiting the victim's house? When it was learned that this woman was a foreign national, the nature of the case changed.

We all knew that, in addition to the public's empathy towards foreign workers and their perception of them as ‘guests,’ there were also negative perceptions based on the idea that they were competing with local workers in low-wage sectors. It could be said that the formation of these opinions was influenced by the fact that news reports in the media generally presented them as either ‘exploited workers’ or ‘foreigners threatening the local workforce.’ However, the flow of the story drew attention to an exceptional direction.

“Generally, foreign women working illegally would steal from the homes where they worked and then flee back to their countries. Because such incidents were well known, immediate action was taken to identify the person working in the victim's home. The police learned that the victim had dismissed this woman from her job some time ago. Meanwhile, many high-ranking officials were pressuring the Police Department to solve the murder as soon as possible.

“The police found the former maid. She had not fled the country. While she was being questioned, her relationships were being investigated. The person who appeared during the interrogation was someone who found foreign women for

cleaning and maid work in such houses. However, he had left the city with a foreign woman. Information obtained from bus companies indicated that the police were on the right track.

“Three days after the incident, the police went to the city where the suspects were located. The whereabouts of the suspect and the foreign woman, who was later identified as his girlfriend, were determined. The woman and man, who were taken into custody in a raid, initially claimed they had not committed any crime. Experienced detectives from the homicide division searched the house where the two lovers were staying. A wedding ring was found hidden in a secret place. The name of the victim's spouse, who was in the process of divorcing him, was written inside the ring. Why would the wedding ring of a murdered person be in their possession? . . . A very important piece of evidence had been found.

“The search of the house did not only reveal the wedding ring. Eight rings, two bracelets and a necklace, which were determined to have been stolen from the victim's home, were also found. On the way back, they confessed and recounted the incident. The foreign domestic worker who worked at the victim's home had been fired by the travel entrepreneur because she drank too much alcohol. After being fired, she told her friends that there was a safe in the house where she worked containing a large amount of money. The murder suspect immediately made a plan with his foreign girlfriend to steal the money from the safe in the house.

At this point in the story, our old friend took a short breather. The newspaper reports of those days had given extensive coverage to the murderer's confessions in court.

“One day, at a drinks table, Tatiana told us about a large safe containing a large amount of money in the home of the ‘turizmci’ who had fired her, and she described the layout of the house to us. She suggested murder. Thinking it would be a profitable venture, we all planned the murder together. The next day, I called the old man and said, ‘You fired Tatyana; if you like, I can find you a new maid.’ He agreed. After that, we put

the murder plan into action. Tatyana came with us to keep watch. I went inside with my girlfriend Ludmilla.

"I introduced Ludmilla to the ‘turizmci’ as the new maid. Then I said I was going to the bathroom and went into the bathroom. From there, I called out, “Which towel should I use?” He came and gave me a towel. Just as he was about to turn around and leave, I put the towel he had given me around his neck from behind and started to squeeze. The old man was resisting despite all my efforts. I called out to Ludmilla for help. She gave me a blue cloth that didn't let air through. We put it over his head. With my girlfriend's help, we tied his hands and feet with a tie and sheets. That's how we managed to kill the ‘turizmci’."

“Then, following Tatyana's instructions, we easily found the safe key. But when we opened the safe, we were disappointed. Expecting billions of dollars and jewellery, we found only a wedding ring, eight rings, a gold tie pin and a bracelet. We took these items, along with two bottles of whisky and a bottle of champagne from the house, and fled. That night, we partied with the whisky and champagne.

Deathly silence must be like this. No one was in a position to speak. The scene was hauntingly impressive in our minds. However, the personality our old friend began to describe had suddenly changed; he had become the jurist brother.

“The victim's younger brother, who interrupted the conference abroad, was a professor of criminal law. He took the floor in court and said the following. Stating that he would leave the punishment to be imposed on the defendants to the discretion of the court, he said, "They brutally murdered an elderly man who welcomed them, showed them mercy, gave them work, and lived a quiet life, in a way that makes one's hair stand on end. As a former legal professional, I have always opposed the death penalty. They brutally murdered my brother; yet, I still do not seek the death penalty for them. However, I

respectfully request that they be sentenced to the harshest possible punishment through your noble justice," he said.

“The professor's philosophy of law was based on humanist doctrine, and this approach shaped his stance against the death penalty. His understanding of criminal law centred on the individual's right to life. The death penalty was not considered legitimate from a human rights perspective because it irrevocably deprived an individual of their right to life. The impossibility of redress in the event of a miscarriage of justice in the death penalty must have been an important argument in the professor's opposition to this punishment. It is well known that wrong decisions leading to irreversible consequences undermine the credibility of the legal system.

“His approach to criminal law emphasised that punishments should serve the purposes of deterrence and rehabilitation. Statistical findings indicating that the death penalty has no definite deterrent effect probably supported his stance against this punishment. It is conceivable that alternative punishments such as life imprisonment could be less harmful and more effective than the death penalty in terms of deterrence.

“The professor's experiences in prison during the military coup undoubtedly increased his sensitivity to the ethical and social consequences of the death penalty. The idea that the death penalty could fuel hatred and resentment in society and undermine trust in the state was consistent with his humanist approach. His experiences during political trials must have shown him that the death penalty could be used as a means of coercion in political crimes. The ambiguous nature of political crimes and the manipulation of public opinion made it difficult to apply the death penalty fairly. His humanist approach to criminal law, his emphasis on freedom of thought, and his experiences in prison, particularly the incompatibility of the death penalty with human rights, the risk of judicial error, and the lack of deterrence, seemed to be the main reasons for

his opposition, which was consistent with his understanding of law.

We had always known that our old friend placed great value on human life, which was almost sacred to him, but we never imagined he could be so well-versed in the subject. As always, he once again began his history lesson.

"The regime established in the country a century ago had executed many deserters and opponents of the regime who had rebelled while the price of democracy was being paid at the beginning. Later, the country joined the ranks of nations that hanged their own prime ministers. By 1980, the coup plotters were experienced. We learn this from their memoirs. “Shall we hang them or feed them?” The executions went down in history as one of the darkest chapters in the country's political history. However, starting in 1984, death sentences handed down by courts were not carried out because they were not approved by Parliament. In 1991, an amnesty converted approximately 500 death sentences to 10 years of hard labour, and in 2002, a law converted all death sentences that had not been carried out to life imprisonment. Among these was the death sentence of the "terrorist leader"—the murderer of some thirty thousand or so people—which was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1999.

And then, did he put an end to the matter? . . I doubt it.

"In the trial, one of the defendants who killed the travel entrepreneur. in his home and robbed him was sentenced to life imprisonment and one year of solitary confinement, the foreign woman was sentenced to eighteen years and nine months of imprisonment, and the other was sentenced to two years and one month of imprisonment.

“The professor left a deep mark on criminal law literature not only as an academic but also as a staunch defender of legal philosophy and human rights. The most fundamental quality that made him a “pioneer” in his field was his view of criminal law as a tool for protecting individual freedoms and limiting the use of power by the state. His belief that not every

social problem can be solved through punishment is clearly evident in his opposition to the creation of unnecessary types of crimes and the overcrowding of prisons. He argued that modern criminal law should serve as a guarantee of citizens' rights and freedoms rather than as an instrument of state oppression. This view is particularly evident in his critical stance against criminal norms that restrict freedom of thought or target political opposition.

“In his books and articles, he emphasises that the justice system has a duty to protect innocence and guarantee the right to a fair trial, rather than focusing solely on punishing the guilty. The principle that ‘the benefit of the doubt goes to the defendant,’ meaning that ‘if the crime is not proven, acquittal is required,’ and the idea that it is preferable for criminals to go unpunished rather than risking wrongful conviction, are cornerstones of his legal philosophy. This approach places the utmost importance on the human dignity and fundamental rights of the individual.

"The professor's contributions to criminal law were not limited to the theoretical level; they were also evident in his sensitivity to social and political developments. His active stance as an intellectual on issues such as the independence of the judiciary, the rule of law, and the protection of democratic values made him not only a legal scholar but also a public conscience.

“He brought a liberal, libertarian and human rights-oriented perspective to the country's criminal law, combining academic depth with critical thinking to leave a unique legacy to the legal community. His views served as a valuable guide, reminding us that the law should always be a tool in the pursuit of justice and freedom.

“He was a pioneering academic who embraced the humanist doctrine in criminal law. His views were based on an approach that centred on individual freedoms and emphasised

the principles of proportionality and justice in punishment. However...

The final word was a significant station. At night, when we looked out the train window, there was no sign, no marker, no light to tell us where we were. We were overcome by uncertainty and an inevitable sense of anxiety.

“Five years before his death, I am not sure to what extent the statement made by an opposition politician on the legal situation in the country reflected the retired professor's thoughts. The phrase ‘law has become the dog of politics’ was a powerful metaphor criticising the loss of independence of the law and its subjugation to political powers or politicians. This statement implied that the legal system had become a tool serving political interests rather than justice, meaning that law was being used as a dependent instrument of politics. It described a situation where the principle of the supremacy of law had been undermined, the judiciary had lost its impartiality, and decisions were being made under the influence of political will.

“In his statement, the politician referred to the debates surrounding the non-implementation of Constitutional Court decisions and emphasised that the law was subject to politics. At that time, posts on social media generally contained criticisms regarding the independence of the law, the shaping of judicial decisions by political influences, and the erosion of the justice system. The comparison made by the political opponent was used as a symbolic expression, particularly in discussions about authoritarianism and the rule of law.

Our old friend began to talk about how the subjugation of the law to political powers or its use as a tool was a topic that had been frequently discussed in different periods of history and in different geographical regions.

“In the final days of Rome, the exploitation of law for political gain was a common subject of criticism. In particular, the manipulation of judicial processes by leaders such as Sulla

and Caesar cast a shadow over the impartiality of the law. In the writings of thinkers such as Cicero, it was emphasised that the law had been corrupted by political powers and that justice served personal interests, that the law should be based on universal principles of justice, but that political factions threatened this.

"During periods when the Catholic Church was intertwined with political authority, the law often came under the control of religious and political powers. The Inquisition courts are examples of the law being used as a tool of oppression by religious and political authorities.

"Throughout the Reign of Terror of the French Revolution, the legal system became a tool serving political ideologies. Revolutionary courts were used to eliminate political opponents, and trials often served the political goals of the revolution rather than being fair.

"The Nazi regime made the law an extension of its political ideology. Judges and courts were required to make decisions in line with Nazi Party policies. During Stalin's Great Purge of the 1930s, the legal system was used to purge political opponents. In South Africa, between 1948 and 1994, the apartheid regime, which aimed to secure the political, economic and social superiority of the white minority over blacks, mixed-race people and Asians, used the law to legitimise its racist policies.

“In the 21st century, with the rise of populist or authoritarian governments in some countries, the politicisation of law has once again become a topic of discussion. Issues such as the appointment of judges and the political influence on court decisions have reignited criticism that the law has become a ‘pawn of politics.’ In every era, lawyers, thinkers, and activists have called for the protection of the independence of the law and its removal from political influence.

A brief silence! . . Then what happened? . . Our old friend, as if paying homage to a theatrical uncle, launched into a Shakespearean-style tirade.

"Human life, my friends, is like a magnificent but fleeting symphony of an orchestra; each instrument carries the ups and downs of life's spirit, each note leaves a mark on the fabric woven by fate. In the first act, the joyful tones of the flutes evoke the innocent laughter of childhood; the oboes whisper of youth’s fiery dreams, the sweet and bitter turmoil of love. The violins dance with the fragile hopes of optimism, chasing after perfection, that unattainable ideal, with a crescendo reaching for the heavens. But alas, the deep, sombre strings of the cellos bear the heavy burden of maturity's wisdom; and at that moment, the terrible disappointment of failing to achieve perfection shakes the orchestra like a dissonance. This pain echoes in the sobs of the string instruments, lingers like a shadow in the clarinets' lament, for the human heart bears the pain of falling while climbing toward the summit of ideals. Time, that ruthless master, waves his sceptre impatiently; trumpets bellow the echoes of victories and disasters, while drums thunder like thunderclaps, marking the inevitable rhythm of struggles, defeats, and ultimately death. Each section is a season: the awakening of spring, the exuberance of summer, the melancholic whispers of autumn, and the cold, relentless stillness of winter. And so, the symphony comes to an end; the instruments fall silent one by one, the clarinets' final breath trembles in the unattainable shadow of ideals; the stringed instruments moan with the bitter melody of disappointment; and finally, with the timpani's gentle, lingering final stroke, the music surrenders to eternal silence. The curtain falls, the theatre is shrouded in darkness. No applause, no tears, no vision of perfection remains; only that great silence echoing in the embrace of eternity. Man is but a fleeting actor on this mortal stage; he stumbles through his role in the shadow of his ideals, and when his role is done, he leaves the stage. The orchestra, however, will begin anew to play another story.

Our old friend's final words, no doubt, were about his hero.

“However, I do not believe that the professor, who had embraced and continuously developed humanist ideas throughout his rather long life, was able to see how much of his ideals had been realised. I have my doubts as to whether his theories on criminal law relating to human dignity, like the ideal of democracy, have come to fruition. In the last years of his life, the professor witnessed how the legal ideals he had fought for throughout his life were being trampled underfoot, and how the country's people's trust in the justice system had been shattered. Indeed, in the World Justice Project (WJP)'s annual Rule of Law and Corruption Index, his country ranked quite low in both the rule of law and the fight against corruption.

Suluova
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